JOURNAL OF ISLAMIC HISTORY AND CULTURE OF INDIA

JOURNAL OF
ISLAMIC HISTORY AND CULTURE
OF INDIA

Volume II (2013)

Editor

SUTAPA SINHA

© University of Calcutta

G 165878

CONTENTS

Editor's Note

It is after the publication of the very first issue of the *Journal of the Islamic History and Culture of India,* the second volume of the Journal was overdue since 2013. Unlike the first volume which was a 'special issue' published in the memory of Professor ABM Habibullah, the second volume is a regular one which embodies only invited research articles from the historians and scholars of national and international repute. Not only the present and former faculty members of the Calcutta University but also the faculty members from other Universities of the country like Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh Uttar Pradesh, Central University of Hyderabad and Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh have contributed articles based on their area of specializations. The primary objective of publishing this departmental journal is to promote inter-disciplinary research on various aspects of medieval Indian history with a special emphasis on Indo-Islamic cultural tradition and its manifestation in different parts of the country since political occupation of Islam in India. Fortunately, we have received erudite contributions from our distinguished authors which conform quintessentially to the spirit of this publication. The major thrust of the volume lies on various nuances of socio-cultural history of Medieval India with special emphasis on Islam.

As an Editor, I deeply regret the inordinate delay in bringing out this second volume due to various unavoidable circumstances.

Kolkata, 30 March 2016   **Sutapa Sinha**

                                                                    Editor

Contributors

Amit Dey

Professor, Department of History, University of Calcutta,
1, Reformatory Street, Alipur Campus, Kolkata–700 027.
Email:profamitdey@rediffmail.com

M.N. Rajesh

Assistant Professor, Department of History,
University of Hyderabad, Central University
Gachibowli, Hyderabad–500 046, Andhra Pradesh
Email:mnraja@gmail.com

J. Limainla Ao

Assistant Professor in History,
Immanuel College, Taxes Rd, Lengrijan,
Dimapur, Nagaland–797112
Email:immanuelcollege77112@gmail.com

Rila Mukherjee

Professor, Department of History, School of Social Sciences,
University of Hyderabad, C.R. Rao Road,
Gachibowli, Hyderabad–500 046, Andhra Pradesh
Email:rila.mukherjee@gmail.com

Salma Ahmed Farooqui

Honorary Director, H.K. Sherwani Centre for Deccan Studies &
Associate Professor of History,
Maulana Azad National Urdu University,
Gachibowli, Hyderabad–500032
Email:salmafarooqui@gmail.com

Swati Biswas

Assistant Professor and Head, Department of Islamic History and Culture,
University of Calcutta,
1, Reformatory Street, Alipur Campus, Kolkata–700 027.
Email:bswati71@gmail.com

Syed Ali Nadeem Rezavi

Professor, Department of History & Deputy Co-ordinator
Centre for Advanced Study,
Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh–202 002, Uttar Pradesh, India.
Email:nrezavi@gmail.com

Anjona Chattopadhyay

Assistant Professor and Head, Department of History
Derozio Memorial College, Rajarhat, Kolkata–700136 &
Guest faculty, Department of IHC, Calcutta University.
Email:anjonachatt@yahoo.co.in

Ranjit Sen

Former Professor, Department of Islamic History and Culture,
University of Calcutta,
1, Reformatory Street, Alipur Campus, Kolkata–700 027.
Email:sen.ranjit2010@gmail.com

Biman Samaddar

Assistant Professor and Head, Department of History,
Santipur College, Nadia–741 404, West Bengal &
Guest faculty, Department of IHC, Calcutta University;
Department of History, Rabindra Bharati University
Email:bimansamaddar@gmail.com

Islam and India's Composite Culture

AMIT DEY

During the last few months of 2008, India was being rocked by a series of violent incidents; communal riots in central Assam and northern Maharashtra, persecution of Christian minority in Orissa and Karnataka, increasing enmity between the 'Marathas' and the 'North Indians' which culminated in parochialism, and terrorist attacks in different parts of South Asia. Such unfortunate events actually reiterate the significance of the present topic. Peaceful coexistence is not possible without mutual understanding and mutual appreciation among different communities. Religious stereotyping breeds intolerance. In the broader context of India's multiculturalism the present essay aims at exploring the eclectic trends in Indian Islam. In order to study the evolutionary nature of Islam we shall approach it both in its medieval and modern settings.

In order to understand the nature and magnitude of challenges being faced by the Indian Republic it may often be necessary to critically analyse certain developments in India's neighbourhood and even beyond.

The tenth century is very significant in the history of Islam. This period witnessed the rise of Turks on the ruins of the Abbasid Caliphate, as well as striking changes in the realm of ideas and beliefs. The domination of the *Mutazila* or rationalist school of Islam was terminated by the emergence of orthodox schools that put emphasis on the Quran and Hadith. The period was also marked by the rise to prominence of the Sufi mystics and *Silsilahs* (orders).[1]

The Mutazilites or rationalists received the patronage of the Abbasid Caliphs and used their power to persecute their rivals. They also tried to systematize theology by applying reason (*aql*). The orthodox elements however, condemned them as religious skeptics and persecuted them. It is not surprising that famous Sufi saint Mansur Hallaj was also executed in the tenth century AD for his unorthodox views. The collapse of rationalist school strengthened the hands of the 'traditionalists' which culminated in the advent of four schools of Islamic law. Of these, the Hanafi school was the most liberal. The eastern Turks who later migrated to India were the followers of this school; this partly explains why the Muslims in the subcontinent, unlike their counterparts elsewhere, were often comparatively flexible in matters of faith. The decline of the Mutazilites also contributed to the ascendancy of the Sufi mystics.[2]

The Sufis emerged in Islam at a very early stage. Most of them were highly spiritual persons who were disgusted by the vulgar demonstration of wealth and degeneration of

---

1. Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanate to the Mughals* 1: 235.
2. Ibid., p. 236.

morals in the aftermath of Islam's politico-military triumph. Some of the Sufi pioneers such as Hasan Basri and his disciple, the woman Sufi Rabia (d. eighth century AD) reiterated the importance of prayer, continual fasting and unconditional love of God.[3] The term Sufi originated from the Persian word *suf* meaning coarse wool. The Islamic mystics of Central and West Asia used to wear a long garment *khirqa* manufactured by *suf* which caused constant pinching. Such discomfort kept them awake throughout the night and reminded them about their spiritual duties such as *zikr* (reciting the name of God) and *fiqr* (remembering God).[4] Wearing of a patched garment of wool (*suf*) also indicated that the Sufis tried to follow the legacy of the prophets, and Christian apostles and ascetics who believed in simple living and high thinking. Simple and austere lifestyle made the Sufis very much acceptable to the poor masses in India. At the same time their sophistication in terms of cultivating literature and theology enhanced their status among the aristocracy in general and Muslim aristocracy in particular. The Sufi concept of *fana* or spiritual merger of the devotee with Allah antagonized the orthodox ulema. Mansur Hallaj's proclamation of the doctrine *Anal-Haq* (I am Truth/God) was actually a reflection of the Sufi belief that unification with Allah was the highest stage of enlightenment. Sufi movement achieved its martyr when Mansur had sacrificed his life for his beliefs. The tragic death of Mansur enabled the Sufis to earn the reputation of being men who were pure-hearted, sincere and indifferent to worldly gains.

This was how an essentially quietist movement based on love, devotion and contemplation gradually became inclined towards ecstatic love with the potentiality to challenge existing social norms, religious beliefs, and practices.[5] Between the tenth and twelfth centuries various Sufi orders or Silsilah's emerged. During the same period *khanqahs* (Sufi hospices) were also being established by the renowned Sufis. Apparently, the practices and organization of the *khanqahs* resembled the Buddhist and Christian monastic systems. The ambulatory *Nath Panthi Yogis*, with their *markaz* (headquarters) at Peshawar, familiarized the Sufis with the practices of *hatha-yoga*. The translation of *Amritkund*, the Sanskrit book on *hatha-yoga*, into both Arabic and Persian confirms the interaction between the yogis and Sufis which strengthened the composite nature of Indian culture in the medieval period.[6] Like the wandering yogis, the wandering Islamic mystics, popularly known as Qalandars had to encounter various religio-cultural groups in course of their travelling, and became liberal and unorthodox. However, they were denounced as *be-shara* (those who do not act in conformity with the *sharia*) Sufis by the orthodox

---

3. Ibid.

4. Carl W. Ernst, *Shambhala Guide to Sufism*, New Delhi, 1997. Amit Dey, 'Sufism in India' in *Abakshay* (a bilingual journal), 2004.

5. Chandra, *Medieval India*, p. 237.

6. Ibid., Amalendu De, *Theological Discourses in Indian History*, Presidential Address, The Asiatic Society, Kolkata, 2003-04.

elements. Many present-day *qawwali* singers show their respect to these Qalandars and thus, reflect their appreciation for India's multiculturalism. There are also Sufis who function in tune with the *sharia* (canon law of Islam) and are known as *ba-shara*. This is one of the reasons why Sufi movement should be studied as a heterogeneous movement.

Sanai (d.1131), Rumi (d.1273) and many other Persian poets spread the Sufi messages of mystic union and love far and wide. Imbued with the spirit of humanity and tolerance, their verses created ripples in the Indian subcontinent. It is not surprising that the eclectic Mughal Emperor Akbar was a great admirer of Rumi. With the aid of his tutor, he studied the *Masnawi* of this famous poet. It is argued that a particular section of this famous work, had especially appealed to Akbar. According to it a divine message reminded the Prophet Moses, that he had been sent to unite mankind and not to divide it. Moses was further informed that each people received their own faith in their own language particularly those of Sind and of Hind. These should not be interferred with. Another Persian poet impressed Akbar deeply was Hafiz. Many of his verses reflected a liberal and humanist outlook. Abolition of *Jizya* and the pilgrim tax on the Hindus similarly reflected Akbar's liberal-human outlook.[7] When Akbar's contemporaries, such as Elizabeth of England and Henry IV of France persecuted the Catholics and Huguenots respectively, the Great Mughal embarked on a policy of *Sulhe-Kul* or 'Peace with All'[8]

Some of the Sufis were fond of musical gatherings (*sama*) in which a state of ecstasy was created. This created consternation among the orthodox ulema who argued that music is not permitted in Islam.[9] The Chishti Sufis were amongst earliest Islamic mystic migrants to South Asia. This Sufi Silsilah tried to appropriate various aspects of Indian cultural traditions, such as music, and became extremely popular in the subcontinent. They supported *sama*.

In the thirteenth century, Delhi emerged as one of the major centres (*markaz*) of the Chishtis. This was possible largely due to the activities of the illustrious Chishti saint Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki, who left his birthplace in Transoxiana and arrived in Delhi in the early 1220s. He was warmly welcomed by Sultan Iltutmish.[10] It is useful to note that following the Mongol devastations of Central and West Asia, Delhi emerged as an inviting place before many eminent scholars, religious divines and fugitive princes. Thus the ground was becoming fertile for the emergence, enhancement and sustenance of multiculturalism in a sultanate whose epicentre was Delhi. It is unfortunate that eight centuries after that healthy beginning it has become necessary for us to discuss the

---

7. S. Nurul Hasan, *Religion, State and Society in Medieval India*, New Delhi, 2005, p. 72.

8. Hirendra Nath Mukerjee, *From Amir Khusrau to Abul Kalam Azad; The Commingling of Cultures in India*, The Asiatic Society, Kolkata, 1999, p. 6.

9. Chandra, *Medieval India*, p. 237.

10. Ibid., p. 239. For details about Kaki, Chishtis and *sama*, see Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India* 1, New Delhi, 1986 (reprint).

possibilities of fortifying the multicultural dimensions of the Indian Republic. After coming to Delhi, Kaki faced the challenges both from the ulema and the Suhrawardis. The former wanted to oust him from Delhi and condemned Kaki as a heretic on the ground that the mystic was fond of Sama. This criticism had no impact upon Sultan Iltutmish who wanted to use Sufi influence to counter the ulema. Once Kaki was about to leave Delhi for Ajmer, which is also an important centre of the Chishtis. But a huge crowd accompanied him outside the city for miles and he had to settle in Delhi. The magnitude of popularity the Chishti saints enjoyed in South Asia is amazing. However, the Suhrawardi Silsilah, because of their orthodox approach, could not enjoy such popularity among the Delhiites.[11] Why some of the Sultans of Delhi, such as Iltutmish, favoured charismatic Sufis like Kaki, should be studied in its broader historical perspective. The Turko-Afghan Sultans were trying to build up their empires in the Indian subcontinent where Muslim population was overwhelmed by the non-Muslim population. Particularly during the embryonic stage of empire building, strict observance of the *sharia* (canon law of Islam) would have antagonized the majority population. Establishment of the *sharia* rule in tune with the advice provided by the ulema, was not possible in the Indian environment. Many sultans who excelled in statecraft realized that an empire derives its strength from heterogeneity and multiculturalism. Now many Sufi saints epitomized India's composite culture in the sense that they had Hindu, Sikh and Muslim followers. Many Chishti and Qadiri Sufis believed in the policy of *sulh-i-kul* or 'peace with all'. Later on, Mughal Emperor Akbar could emerge as a great empire-builder largely because of his capacity to translate this concept into practice. So offering patronage to some Sufis implied strengthening of the symbols of multiculturalism. Thus many Sultans were able to win the confidence and loyalty of the subject population who represented diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

It should be mentioned that many Sufi saints actually became famous after their demise. Muinuddin was no exception. His image as a saintly man became larger after his death in AD 1235; Muhammad bin Tughluq was one of the earliest Sultans to visit his grave. Canonization of a Sufi is marked by the erection of structures like dome or mosque on the tomb of the deceased Sufi. For example, a mosque was built near his tomb by Mahmud Khalji of Malwa during the fifteenth century. However, Muinuddin's stature as a saint reached its apex under Akbar who nurtured deep respect for him. Akbar could grasp the political importance of Ajmer. This far-sighted ruler also identified Muinuddin as the symbol of India's composite culture who was respected by all irrespective of religious beliefs. Akbar knew that in the volatile situation of Rajasthan such positive elements required strengthening.[12] Muinuddin advised his followers to 'develop river like generosity, sun like affection and earth like hospitality.'[13] River, sun and earth are sacred among the Hindus.

---

11. Chandra, *Medieval India*, pp. 239-40.

12. Ibid.

13. Amalendu De, *Theological Discourses*, p. 9.

In this way the Sufi saints reflected their appropriating nature while addressing the common people in a language they understood. Such an approach increased the popularity of Chishti saints in medieval South Asia.

It brings us to another great Chishti saint Baba Fariduddin Ganj-I-Shakkar, the most famous disciple of Kaki. Farid lived at Hansi in modern Haryana, later moved to Ajodhan which was on the Sutlej on the main route connecting Multan and Lahore.[14] He put emphasis on poverty emulating the Prophet Muhammad who used to say 'I take pride in my poverty.' It is useful to note that many Sufi saints used the image of the Prophet as a source of authority. This was a natural legitimizing process as they had to encounter the challenges of Islamic orthodoxy.[15] Farid also put stress on renunciation of worldly goods and attachments, control of the senses by fasting and other austerities, humbleness and service to others.[16] He was a saint of broad outlook; some of the verses ascribed to him were included in the *Guru Granth Sahib* of Nanak.[17] Many devout Sikhs who annually visit the important *gurdwaras* situated in Pakistan, also pay their visits to the shrine of Baba Farid in Pakpattan (now in Pakistan) as a mark of respect for a saint who epitomized India's composite culture. The print and audio-visual media can make it a point to identify such shrines which are the symbols of India's multiculturalism in order to give them due publicity. The historical significance of such shrines and symbols should also be discussed in the school textbooks in order to promote national integration. One positive development in this direction has already taken place. Let us hope that it achieves its desired goal for the best interest of the Indian republic.[18]

The Chishti saints laid emphasis on a life of simplicity, poverty, humility and selfless devotion to God. Many of them were so obsessed with the notion of poverty that they lived in mud-covered thatched houses, wore patched clothes and encouraged prolonged fasting. Like the yogis, they considered that control of senses was necessary for spiritual uplift. Muinuddin Chishti interpreted the highest form of devotion to Allah in terms of redressing the misery of the miserable, helping the helpless and feeding the unfed. Illustrious Chishti Sufi saint Nizamuddin Auliya (d.1325) of Delhi regarded altruistic services as more important than obligatory prayers.[19] Indeed! The citizens of modern India

---

14. Chandra, *Medieval India*, p. 239-40. For information about individual Sufi saints of South Asia see N. Hanif, *Biographical Encyclopaedia of Sufis; South Asia*, New Delhi, 2000.

15. Arthur Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet: The Indian Naqshbandiyya and the Rise of the Mediating Sufi Shaykh*, South Carolina, 1998. Amit Dey, *The Image of the Prophet in Bengali Muslim Piety*: 1850-1947, Kolkata, 2005.

16. Chandra, *Medieval India*, p. 240.

17. Ibid.

18. The Ministry of Human Resource Development in India is planning to introduce a central panel armed with legal powers to challenge publishers and schools on textbooks alleged to be spreading communal hatred. *The Telegraph* (Calcutta) 21 November 2008.

19. Chandra, *Medieval India*, p. 241.

have much to learn from the timeless messages left behind by the medieval Indian Sufi saints.

At a time when the Turks turned a blind eye to the Islamic concept of brotherhood and looked down upon the ordinary people, the Sufi attitude of non-discrimination helped to reduce social tensions. The principal concern of the Sufis was the amelioration of the condition of Muslims. However, their care and concern did not exclude the Hindus. The Chishti saints freely interacted with Hindu and Jain yogis and discussed with them various matters, particularly yogic exercises. Once being greatly impressed by the devotion of a group of Hindus, Nizamuddin Auliya remarked before his friend, poet Amir Khusrau, 'Every community has its own path and faith, and its own way of worship.'[20]

The creative interaction between the Sufis and yogis has been referred to above. The broad-minded Sufis in medieval India had no problem in appreciating the benefits of yogic exercises. In the modern world many people irrespective of their religious affiliation derive benefit from such exercises. The ever-expanding group of beneficiaries includes the atheists too. In short, yoga is not the monopoly of any particular religion or religious group. Many feel that doing *pranayam* (breathing exercise) is not even remotely associated with Hinduism or any religion. But unfortunately, under the spell of aggressive Islamization a section of the population in a Southeast Asian country hitherto known for its celebration of cultural pluralism, are planning to impose *fatwa* on such exercises.[21] Seeing such an attitude, some leading Sufis of medieval India must be turning in their graves.

The term *pranayam* may be a Sanskrit word, but again language is not the property of any particular religion. The Prophet Muhammad advised his followers to learn different languages whenever necessary.[22] Many Sufi saints and Muslim princes (such as Dara Shukoh) followed this advice and learnt many languages. The Sufi patronage to vernacular literature is well known. This liberal Islamic tradition apparently influenced some nineteenth-century non-Muslim scholars and thinkers such as Rammohun Roy and Bhai Girish Chandra Sen who thoroughly studied Islam. It is a travesty that in twentieth-century India ignorance and hatred towards some languages continued to increase. This is a destabilizing force so far as the polyglot republic of India is concerned. Here it would be appropriate to provide one example. In the late 1930s Gandhiji inaugurated the Bharat Mata Mandir in Varanasi. Idolatry was not encouraged there but there were graceful panels depicting the scripts of India's major languages. One learned visitor in the early 1940s observed that Urdu, which evolved on the soil of India, did not have a panel to itself. The management explained to that visitor that the reason behind the exclusion of Urdu was that it was a foreign language. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, known as 'Frontier Gandhi', was also present at the inauguration. We can imagine what he might have felt about this

---

20. Ibid., pp. 241-2.

21. *The Statesman*, Kolkata, 8 November 2008. The country is Malaysia.

22. Amit Dey, *Image of the Prophet*, chapter three.

'insensitive and illiterate action'.[23] Incidents such as this reveal that even in the years of independence a common platform could not be created where both the Hindus and Muslims could converge.[24]

The failure of the twentieth-century Indian politicians to create a common platform reminds us of the endeavour of the Mughal Prince Dara Shukoh who thought about bringing different communities together. It appears from his scholarly work *Majma-ul-Bahrain* (Mingling of two oceans, i.e. Hinduism and Islam and the book was written in Persian), that he believed in *ijtihad* or right of the learned to interpret scriptures according to changing circumstances. In other words, he put emphasis on *Aql* or reason, like his predecessor Akbar and cultural successor Raja Rammohun Roy. Actually the clash is not between different civilizations, the clash is within Islam, it is between *ilm* (here the term *ilm* or knowledge has been used in a narrow sense, meaning scriptural knowledge) and *aql* (reason). The door of *ijtihad* being partly closed, *aql* appears to have taken a back seat within Islam. But, till the tenth century, when the *Mutazilites* (rationalist school) were still around, the term *ilm* was used in the broad sense as it allowed *aql* (reason) to be its integral part. Through different phases, spanning over several centuries, Islam experienced the reassertion of orthodoxy, which reduced the term *ilm*, virtually to the status of literal fundamentalism or scripturalism. Eminent historian, Muzaffar Alam has implied in his scholarly work, that with the advent of western political dominance since the late eighteenth century, the nervousness of the ulema increased, and they renounced and denounced the spirit of experimentation. They forgot that actually this spirit of experimentation and argumentation made Islam a world religion. In this way the door of *ijtihad* was partly closed during the colonial milieu, culminating in the decline of *aql* (reason) in Islamic societies.[25] Francis Robinson, in one of his scholarly works has shown that in the medieval era *ulum-i-aqliyya* (also known as *maqulat*, meaning 'perceived by the intellect', the Islamic rational sciences, or rational knowledge) flourished alongside *ulum-i-naqliyya* (also known as *manqulat*, meaning the 'revealed' or 'transmitted sciences') in the Islamic curriculum of the three great empires, the Mughal, the Ottoman and the Safawid. Gradually *ulum-i-aqliyya* lost its importance in the Islamic world though this did not happen simultaneously in the Islamic societies of the world.[26] Majority of the Muslim theologians still believe that if the experimentation is allowed to continue, Islam could be overwhelmed by the 'other'. This situation is posing a serious threat to India's multicultural traditions. At the same time we have to appreciate that the ulema is not a monolith, they do not speak in one voice. At times they can play a very creative role in society.[27]

23. Mukherjee, *Khusrau to Azad*, p. 3.

24. Ibid.

25. Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam in India*, New Delhi, 2004.

26. Francis Robinson, *The Ulama of Farangi Mahall and Islamic Culture in South Asia*, New Delhi, 2001, chapter eight.

27. To understand the creative role played by the ulema see Francis Robinson, *Islam South Asia and the West*, New Delhi, 2007, chapters 2 and 5.

We shall have an occasion to deal with the creative ulema including Abul Kalam Azad, but let us now concentrate on eclectic Dara Shukoh. Without being sectarian, Dara in his very first work in Persian entitled *Safinat-ul-Awliya* (the notebook of the Saints) wrote about various Sufi orders.[28] However, the most significant part of this work is the author's focus on women as he deals with the wives and daughters of the Prophet and some women mystics. Indeed! There cannot be any serious discussion on liberal-multicultural traditions if we exclude women. Some scholars on gender issues often imply that the gender discourse is the direct outcome of India's exposure to the West. I suggest with all humility, that they can provide a new dimension to their gender-related research if they can spare some time and energy to understand the Indianness of this discourse as prevalent in pre-colonial India. A republic is benefited when its citizens become aware of the achievements of their ancestors.

In order to study India's composite culture, it is equally important to carry out research on Muslims in colonial and pre-colonial India who were well versed in Sanskrit. Twentieth-century Bengali thinker Rezaul Karim wrote an article on this subject at a time when separatist politics started to vitiate inter-community relations in India with renewed vigour.[29] Rezaul Karim, who wanted to promote a better understanding between different communities through his various speeches and creative writings, is relatively unknown to the Indian youth. It would be useful to carry out serious research on such relatively unknown but remarkable personalities. Dara Shukoh, who learnt Sanskrit, naturally found mention in Karim's article. Dara's Sanskrit-learning enabled him to explore and appreciate monotheism of Upanishad, which according to him was not different from monotheism of the Quran. From AH 1066 onwards, he was more deeply interested in the study of Hinduism. In AH 1066 he got the *Jug Bashist* (famous Sanskrit text *Yoga Vasishtha*) translated into Persian. Shortly after, he himself translated the Upanishads into Persian prose. Most probably, he had Bhagvat Gita translated by one of his courtiers.[30]

In his *Hasanat-ul-Arifin*, which he completed in AH 1064, Dara has included the name of Baba Lal, the only Hindu whose aphorisms he has quoted. In the *Majma-ul-Bahrain* also, Dara has put down the name of this saint, whom he calls Baba Lal *Bairagi*, by the side of those Muslim saints and divines who have been the best representatives of Islamic mysticism.[31] The inclusion of the name of a Hindu in such an exclusive list of Muslim divines shows unmistakably the high esteem in which this devotee was held by Dara. Dara

---

28. Dara Shukoh, *Safinat-ul-Awliya*, later on in 1853 it was published from Agra. I have consulted that Persian version preserved in the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Kolkata.

29. Rezaul Karim, *Samskrita Charchay Musalman* (in Bengali), published in *Desh*, 9 October 1937, reprint in *Desh* (Kolkata), 17 November 2008.

30. *Majma-ul-Bahrain*, by Dara Shukoh, edited in the original Persian with English translation, notes and variants by M. Mahfuz-ul-Haq, The Asiatic Society, Kolkata, first published 1929, reprint in 1982, p. 28.

31. Ibid., p. 24.

invited the saint and had conversations. It appears that Dara's private secretary, Chandar Bhan, was present on the occasion of these interviews and perhaps, acting as an interpreter.[32] It is useful to note that Dara's eclectic mind was so broad that he did not confine his efforts to explore the commonalities between Hinduism and Islam only. He was also thinking about including other religions in his project such as Christianity. Apparently this inclination of Dara was manifested in the year (AD) 1640-41, when he carefully studied the Holy Bible.[33]

The essence of Dara's religious ideas is resonated in the pages of his *Majma-ul-Bahrain*. His book begins with an interesting verse: 'Faith and Infidelity, both are galloping on the way towards Him (God)...'. Apparently Abul Fazl had this verse inscribed on a building which Akbar had built for the common use of the Hindus and the Muslims.[34] It is a clear manifestation of the fact that Dara derived inspiration from the eclectic spirit which was sustained and enhanced by the policy undertaken by his great grandfather. In the pages of *Majma*, Dara portrayed himself as a *faqir* endowed with esoteric knowledge (*Ilm-i-Batin*) with which he aspired to know the tenets of religion of the Indian monotheists.[35] Dara was elated to find that the difference between Indian monotheism and Islamic monotheism was only verbal.

Dara Shukoh's Persian version of Upanishads entitled *Sirr-i-Akbar* was translated into Latin in 1800. At a later period the German philosopher Schopenhauer (1778-1860) was influenced by this work. Dara should rightly be called a profounder of the concept of modernism based on universalism, which was more visible in the ideas and activities of Raja Rammohun Roy since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Roy, in his various works such as the *Manazaratul Adian* (in Arabic, no longer available), *Tuhfat-ul-Muaohiddin* (1803-04, in Persian), *Vedanta Sara* (1815) and other works on the Upanishads, expressed his ideas on theological issues. He had analysed theological issues from the liberal-human-rational viewpoint.[36] It is interesting to note that Rammohun's knowledge in the English language was not sound before 1809. Much before learning English he became well versed in Arabic and Persian languages. So it appears that he was inspired by the concept of monotheism by reading the Quran. Similarly, it would not be wrong to deduce that he was introduced to rationalist ideas by reading Islamic literature. The *Mutazilites*, who were persecuted in the tenth century AD represented the rationalist school of Islam and Rammohun was familiar with their views. He reflected his rationalistic bent of mind in the pages of *Tuhfat* which appeared before he started to learn English. Apparently, Rammohun was inspired by the Islamic spirit of *ijtihad* or the right of the individual to interpret

32. Ibid.—

33. Amalendu De, *Nabachetanar Dui Agrapathik: Dara Shukoh O Rammohun Roy*, in Dilip Kumar Biswas, Pratul Chandra Gupta and others edited, *Rammohun Swaran*, Kolkata, 1989, p. 294.

34. *Majma*, p. 37.

35. Ibid., p. 38.

36. Amalendu De, *Theological Discourses*, pp. 11-12.

scriptures in tune with changing circumstances. We need to study his religious ideas or social reform activities in this context. On the one hand Roy had a genuine spiritual commitment, on the other hand he believed that religious reform can pave the way towards social progress in India.[37] Of course there is no denying the fact that his rationalistic bent of mind later acquired a new dimension as he accessed western knowledge through the English language.[38] Like Dara, Rammohun's religious ideas were also helpful to the growth of a new consciousness in a multi-religious country like India.[39]

Rammohun thought about transcending the constraints of caste, family, and region of any particular community. He envisaged a wider community of Indians and would link it to an international community of mankind. That was why unlike many of his contemporaries he was not claiming superiority for any particular religion. He placed all major religions on the same plane provided they were bereft of superstition and guided by ethics and rationalism. In this way he became a part of a broader process which we can call rudimentary or embryonic form of nation-building.[40] Unfortunately, the majority of the citizens of the Indian republic have failed to grasp the relevance of Dara Shukoh or Rammohun Roy in the context of nation-building. Caste consciousness, other forms of irrational behaviour and intolerance are still going strong in our society. Caste consciousness is particularly reflected in the matrimonial advertisements published in leading newspapers.

In spite of such gloomy pictures Rammohun continued to inspire some important personalities both during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. One such personality was the charismatic Brahmo leader Keshub Chandra Sen (1838-84) who wanted to build up a new human society by bringing the people of different faiths closer to each other. With this aim in view, he instructed some of his closest disciples to study Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. Bhai Girish Chandra Sen studied Islam for more than two decades and learnt Arabic, Persian, and Urdu. Besides the Quran, he translated several books on Islam from Arabic, Persian and Urdu into Bengali.[41] Picking up the eclectic thread from Dara Shukoh, and Rammohun, nationalist leader and theologian Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (1888-1958) interpreted Islam from a different perspective. His own outlook was marked by a universal Islamic humanism very much in tune with the liberal Sufi traditions. He tried to build Indian society on the basis of her cultural pluralism. And like Rammohun Roy, he was also thinking in terms of relating that Indian society to the 'world-wide community'. In this context we can refer to Azad's *Tazkira* and Quranic commentary entitled *Tarjuman al-Quran.* Azad argued that denial of the right of *ijtihad* (right to interpret scriptures) 'has been at the root of all the misfortunes in Islamic history'. He firmly 'believed in a continuous, unending process of *ijtihad*, interpretation according to the needs

---

37. See the articles in *Rammohun Swaran.*
38. Ibid.
39. De, *Theological Discourses*, pp. 11-12.
40. See the articles in *Rammohun Swaran.* Amit Dey, *Image of the Prophet*, chapter three.
41. A. Dey, *Image of the Prophet*, chapter three.

of the time.' A section of the ulemas (Muslim theologian) could not agree with Azad, himself a theologian, on many points relating to his Quranic commentary. In order to realize his political objectives, M.A. Jinnah could easily enlist their support.[42] The ideas and activities of Azad confirm the heterogeneous nature of the ulemas and their potentiality to play a creative role in society and polity.

It is true, that the entry-point regarding composite culture in modern India is Raja Rammohun Roy, which gathered momentum under the charismatic leadership of Keshub Chandra Sen and the painstaking scholarship of Bhai Girish Chandra Sen, and later through the powerful pen of Azad. But India's eclectic traditions reached its high watermark in the writings and speeches of the Nobel Laureate poet Rabindranath Tagore. It will be appropriate to devote a few pages to his thought and writings.

Back in December 1995, on a chilly and wet evening at SOAS, noted academic Ghulam Murshid remarked that Tagore did not write much about Muslim society. Late professor Dhruva Gupta responded to this remark by saying that Tagore's engagement with Muslim society should not be judged in terms of quantity alone. Qualitative assessment would be more meaningful in this matter. Indeed! The magnitude of insight manifested in Tagore's engagement with Muslim society would surprise even the experts on Islam. Actually this firm belief has incentivized me to traverse this less-trodden terrain of historical research.

In his essays, speeches, stories, novels and letters, Tagore expressed his views, hope and deep concern regarding Hindu-Muslim relationship. Print media during the time of Tagore and visual media alongside print media of the post-Tagore era played a remarkable role in stereotyping Islam and Muslim society. Both the Oriental and the Occidental media are responsible for this unfortunate development. Perhaps this stereotyping is most visible in connection with the gender discourse. Farsighted Tagore could anticipate this trend and apparently tried to emancipate Islam and Muslim society from such stereotyped image. While dealing with Muslim women Tagore picked up one article written by an English female journalist domiciled in Turkey. She provided a horrific picture of persecution of Muslim women in patriarchal Muslim societies particularly in the Middle East and portrayed that as the national character of the Muslims. Justice Ameer Ali, while responding to this biased portrayal of Muslim society, pointed out that Islam became distorted in a later era. Arab women during Prophetic and Caliphate era enjoyed greater freedom. Similarly, when Hindu society is criticized by the West, Hindu learned men claim that Hindu women enjoyed greater freedom in the classical age. Tagore was shocked by such attitude of the Asiatic people, who share a peculiar tendency to glorify their past without unleashing the energy and intention to radically transform their present society unlike their dynamic western counterparts inspired by scientific discoveries.

Tagore further argues that in the West there is anthropocentrism, a man's dynamism, innovative spirit and achievements are celebrated, but in the oriental world when a man

---

42. De, *Theological Discourses*, p. 14.

shows greatness, he is hardly celebrated as a great man but is deified. Again we have to appreciate the anticipatory spirit of Tagore. We know how the cricket superstars in post-Tagore South Asia are deified. There is little or no effort among the common people to scientifically analyse the factors contributing to the massive success of a cricketer. Tagore points out that at times religiosity is injected into western mind through Eastern Christianity. However, reason ultimately triumphs in the West, alongside the irresistible urge to achieve. The culminating point of this urge is to challenge the infallibility of the scriptures or top religious leaders. Tagore was right, because even the upright intellectuals would think several times before sharing such skepticism in public space when it comes to the oriental world.

On another occasion Tagore recollects how the great poet Tennyson, prior to his death, briefly mentioned India, in one of his compositions. The theme was the great Mughal *Akbar's Dream*. In the context of one night's dream, Akbar divulged his view on the essence of religion and life before his friend and scholar Abul Fazl. In Tennyson's poetic imagination, Akbar saw in that dream how his successors contributed to the decline of religious and ethnic unity in his empire. Ultimately a group of people came from the direction where the sun sets and were able to rebuild that temple of Akbaride India where truth, peace, love, and justice reign supreme. Tagore prays for the poet's dream to materialize but observes that in spite of the great labour and expertise involved in the construction of that temple, the greatest god, the god of love could not be established in that temple. Herein lies the difference, implied Tagore, between the temple of Akbar, where his heart was also involved, and the solid but heartless and soulless structure erected under the British. The influence of the great Sufi (mystical) tradition apparently inspired Tagore to contemplate such juxtaposition. With keen interest, eclectic Akbar used to listen to the theologians representing Hinduism, Islam, Christianity or Zoroastrianism. Akbar with his liberal, humanist and rational outlook showed respect to the Hindu women in the Mughal *zenana*, to the Hindu nobility at the court and the Hindu generals at the battlefield. He went beyond politics and envisaged an inclusive empire in tune with the composite culture of India. But the exogenous people from the land of the setting sun embarked on a policy of non-interference so far as India's religious-cultural life is concerned. Was this detachment a reflection of love? Or was it conditioned by political motive, Tagore wondered.

Akbar has been rightly picked up by Tagore as an epitome of national integration and communal amity. Akbar was not literate, but in the broad sense of the term he was learned. In the medieval period, Persian became the language of diplomacy, trade and culture in the regions between Hindustan and Persia. Poets such as Rumi and Hafiz were some of the best exponents of Persian Renaissance. Their poetry and philosophy created ripples in the cultural world of India. Many of these poets never visited India, but their liberal, humanist and rational outlook influenced many intellectuals in India. Akbar's familiarity with the verses of Hafiz perhaps prompted him to lift *jizya* from the Hindu subjects (S. Nurul Hasan, *Religion, State and Society in Medieval India*, edited with an introduction by Satish Chandra). Akbar also cherished the verses of Rumi (famous for composing

Masnawi). He specially wanted that portion of Rumi to be read out before him where Rumi wrote that *If God wished, He could have created a single religious community in the world. However, that was not His desire. That is why there are several religions and religious communities in the world and each of them received a religious leader. The Prophet implied that there should not be any interference in the religious life of the people of Sind and Hind.* (Cited in Hasan). Indeed! If we juxtapose Akbaride India with contemporary Europe, we would see that when Queen Elizabeth was persecuting the Roman Catholics and the French Emperor forced the Huguenots to leave France for their religious belief, *Sulh-i-Kul* (Peace with All) prevailed in Akbar's India. The Huguenots were skilled workers and contributed to the Industrialization of Britain. Switzerland could excel in watch-making largely due to their influx. Anyway, Akbar's liberal, humanist and rational outlook sustained cosmopolitanism in India. This modernizing trend could be visible in India long before her exposure to colonialism or western civilization and culture. This Indianness of the Renaissance prior to the nineteenth century Indian awakening (as an outcome of India's interaction with the West) has been emphasized by a few historians in the twentieth century and after.

Tagore implied that the British were not sincere in their efforts to promote Hindu-Muslim amity. There is no room for love in their political dictionary. Rather they thrive by creating discord. Only law and sophisticated administrative network cannot strengthen the notion of brotherhood among different communities. True love and reading of the soul is important, which Akbaride India was capable of doing. When love or humility triumphs over racial arrogance, we notice growth and sustenance of universal brotherhood, which is the need of the hour.

Aristotle and Plato are not the monopoly of the Greeks. Learned Muslims, appreciate their contribution to mankind. Similarly, Nawsherwane Adil is not the monopoly of the Persians. He was venerated by medieval Indian Muslims. Hindus have the right to be entertained by literature produced by English authors; we have the right to access medical treatment offered by the Europeans. Similarly, we can take advantages of the Railway and telegraph system. We never ask whether they are the creation of our ancestors or not. Discovery of a particular nation can be the treasure of the entire mankind. Contrary to this spirit, I found during my stay in the UK that my Malaysian Muslim friend decided not to visit the supermarket called TESCO on the ground that its owner is Jewish (1997)!

Tagore observed during the Swadeshi Movement that one Hindu activist asked his fellow-Muslim compatriot to maintain safe distance while the former was drinking a glass of water. Such social exclusion creates a wound which is difficult to heal. (Reminds us of living together separately in apartheid South Africa – Prof. Hari Vasudevan.) Tagore interpreted the anti-kine-killing attitude as dogmatic and hypocritical because the Hindus slaughter animals in the name of religious sacrifice (buffalo killed during Durga Puja) but when the Muslims kill cows, Hindus make it an issue. Tagore argues that some youths exposed to new learning would debate that India is an agricultural country so.... Dismissing this view Tagore pointed out that buffalos also pull the plough and produce milk, then they

should also be spared by Hindus (during riot in Bihar over kine slaughter). We have created a rift in our society that is why the divide-and-rule policy is successful. We do not have the right to accuse the foreigners for pursuing such a policy. First we should learn to keep our own house in order.

Hindus observe *non-violent non-cooperation* with the non-Hindus. European Buddhist or European Muslims are not contradictory terms. But religious identity is main among Muslims and Hindus in India. So there cannot be a term like 'Muslim Buddhist' or 'Muslim Christian'. Hindus are ritual-based while Muslims are religion-based. During the *Khilafat* phase Muslims often could welcome the Hindus even in the premises of mosques. Hindus failed to reciprocate. In his youthful days when Tagore was exposed to his zamindari, he found, much to his dismay, that his *swadeshiwala nayeb* folded the carpet whenever any respectable Muslim entered. This *Jajim* culture symbolically represented social exclusion and exposed the potential weakness of Swadeshi movement or political activities in India. This was the stumbling block before the nation building process. There was a time when the Greeks, Persians, Sakas and others entered India to strengthen its composite culture. But these happened in the pre-Hindu period. Hindu age was an age of reaction, when *Brahmanical* orthodoxy was allowed to be strongly entrenched. In the post-Buddhism period, in a dexterous manner *Rajputs* were incorporated to bolster social exclusion. (Satish Chandra calls it 'symbiotic relationship' between the Rajputs and the Brahmins, which would be broken with the advent of the Turks.) Where is the solution? Transformation of the mind like that of Europe whose quest for truth and knowledge on the basis of detached objectivity enabled them to leave behind the medieval past and to proceed towards modernity marked by the triumph of reason, enlightenment and humanity. Hindus and Muslims should emulate them to come out of their comfort zones conditioned by religious-ritualistic ambience because the search for truth and the unknown requires traversing the rough terrain of life. Tagore continues that there are three major linguistic/ethnic groups in Switzerland but they constitute one nation. How is that possible? In India the custodians of Hindu orthodoxy are opposed to inter-caste marriage (not to speak about inter-community marriage), whereas in Switzerland there is no restriction regarding blood relationship involving different groups. In the Frontier Province, the Pathans sometimes used to abduct Hindu ladies. Tagore's friend discovered that once this act was being repeated, the Hindu neighbourhood did not protest on the ground that '*wo to beniyaki lerki*'. Implication is that when Hindus do not have harmony among themselves how can they maintain it when it comes to the relationship with another religious community so different from theirs?

Historians have debated over the factors contributing to the vivisection of India. Some social scientists have argued that the divide-and-rule policy of the colonial masters contributed to Partition. Some others would blame the 'Two Nation Theory' put forward by the paramount leader of the Muslim League. But divide-and-rule policy is an external factor. In recent historiography, the blame is largely placed on internal agencies at work both within Hindu and Muslim societies. Unlike these historians, Tagore did not live to experience Partition, but significantly he could anticipate and understand the internal factors

contributing to the growth and sustenance of cleavage between the two communities. He compared this cleavage with a hole at the bottom of a ship. We did not repair this hole, Tagore argued, instead we perennially blamed the storm for the ship-wreck. But this storm is an external factor which represented the colonial government (or their divide-and-rule policy). It is quite normal for the storm to take advantage of the hole at the bottom of the vessel. Here Tagore appeared as an insightful historian who would put more emphasison internal factors behind major historical changes such as Europe's transition from feudalism to capitalism or the vivisection of India. Tagore further extrapolated that untouchability is merely an external manifestation of our exclusivist mindset which cannot be transformed by either Swadeshi or *Khilafat* Non-cooperation Movement. He compared the antiquarian minded Hindus and Muslims with the infamous Bushmen who kill other people with poisoned arrows as soon as they are visible. So they are incapable of creative and meaningful interaction with others which is the sine qua non for the efflorescence humanity and spirituality. Forward looking Europeans transcend boundaries, whereas Hindus and Muslims in India create boundaries to celebrate segregation. This was regarded by him as the gravest challenge before the nation-building process.

While managing his zamindari in riverine Eastern Bengal, receptive Tagore observed that during storm over bulging and ferocious *Padma*, rival birds forget their enmity and take shelter in the same spot together. But as soon as the storm stopped, the resumption of rivalry among those birds used to intrigue the poet. *Khilafat*, according to the great poet was like that temporary storm and not the solution.

In support of his hypothesis the poet referred to the friction involving the *Nambudiri Brahmins* and *Mopillahs* in Malabar at a time when the *Khilafat* Movement reached its apex. The *Nambudiri Brahmins* cherished hatred towards the Muslims whereas the *Mopillah* Muslims ignored the *Nambudiri* Brahmins. Tagore had very little faith in that type of political movements which appeared to him as superficial in the sense that they mostly had short term or immediate goals. Instead he put emphasis on knowing the neighbourhood emulating Mughal Prince Dara Shukoh or Rammohun Roy. Very few Hindus tried to know Islam like Raja Rammohun Roy. Similarly, very few Muslims tried to understand Hinduism like Dara Shukoh. Sound knowledge of the neighbourhood is essential to overcome hatred. Without delving deep into the *Mopillah* problem or the *Akali* Sikh problem we talk about national integration. This is the social myopia of political parties in India.

Poverty and hatred go hand-in-hand in modern India. Tagore visited Muslim countries such as Iran and parts of the Arab world which were never thoroughly colonized like India. Muslims are broad-minded there because they enjoy freedom and they are also solvent. They spontaneously told the poet that they not merely admire him they also love him. However, the poet admitted that there are numerous educated and broad-minded Muslims in India too—a section of whom had befriended the poet. Tagore was very much worried to see the irreligious nature of religion all over the world. Much to his dismay he discovered that religion was being used as a source of domination over a section of the population. The perturbed poet went to the extent of concluding that atheism is sometimes better than theism.

To expose the lack of solidarity among Hindus and prevalent exploitation in multi-layered Hindu society, the poet cited the example of East Bengal where *namasudras* supported Muslims on various occasions. Nation-building process suffered a jolt in India where people introduce themselves either as Hindus or as Muslims and hardly as Indians. Whereas Englishmen introduce themselves as Englishmen with pride, religious identity becomes insignificant among them.

It brings us to the language controversy. Language has vitality; it cannot be forcefully or superficially changed or manipulated. All civilized languages incorporate some foreign words in a spontaneous and creative manner. Even a sectarian Bengali Hindu uses many *tatsama* and *tadbhaba (Mussalmani)* words. If you say '*mejajta kharap hoye achhe*' it sounds natural. But if you say '*moner gatikta bikal hoye achhe*' you will be frowned upon. Authors of Scotland, Ireland, and Wales did not try to burden the English language by indiscriminate incorporation of regional terms and words which they use in their family circle. They used unalloyed English as a medium of writing. Tagore betrayed his sense of humour when he pointed out that the Indian word jungle found a place in the English lexicon in a natural way, but that does not mean that we can also replace the word 'forest' by *aranya*. In the Northwest, Sind and Punjab, bitterness prevailed among Hindus and Muslims. But there is no movement to forcefully incorporate *tatsama* words in the Urdu language. Bengal is unique as a bad example. The world poet argued that words used in Muslim everyday life can be incorporated in Bengali if powerful Muslim writers describe that everyday life in literature. There was a paucity of such genre during his lifetime. This sort of incorporation cannot be carried out by politically motivated people. Tagore was very much shocked when one sectarian person accused him as the propagator of idolatry through his composition *Pujarini*. Another person accused him as a legitimizer of sin when he wrote *Gandharir Abedan*. This was in the context of feeble Dhritarashtra's inability to control the course of events. Tagore responded by saying that portrayal of Jewish character by Shakespeare did not instigate Benjamin Disraeli or Lord Reading (Viceroy of India) to ban the *Merchant of Venice* from the curriculum. Bengal lacks maturity in that sense. Tagore claims that lack of significant interaction between Hindus and Muslims in the cultural world is manifested by the fact that only poet Bharatchandra was influenced by the urban literary style of Persian. I do not accept this because Urdu itself is the outcome of linguistic intermingling or *majma ul zabanat*. Ameer Khusrau very consciously said *Beya barather ao re bhai-benoshi mother boith re mai.*

We are like frogs in a well confined to *Kathakatha*, Ramayana, *Panchali and Kabigan* unaware of the changes and dynamism shaping the outside world. Emancipation of the intellect is not possible because both Hindus and Muslims derive inspiration from the past. We have incarcerated our mind in the village *chandimandap* or *panjika* which are skeptical towards the world of experiment and discovery.

Education, poverty eradication and reconstruction of the villages involving Hindus and Muslims are the solutions. Parsis could not be agitated against the Hindus because they are rational and educated. Bengal should emulate them. When Hindus and Muslims would be

involved in *palli sangathan* it would be their creative engagement. They will fight shoulder to shoulder to protect them from destruction. Western civilitas showcase itself in cities. But India's soul is in the villages. Communal violence occurs mainly in the cities. People in the villages have a horizontal relationship. Therefore, rural Bengal enjoys some immunity against communal frenzy. It could not vitiate the environment of Santiniketan claimed Tagore.[43].

In the present essay we have tried to remove the stereotyped image of Islam. Religious stereotyping leads to misunderstanding between different communities. At the same time we should be aware that in some of India's neighbouring countries there is a conscious and systematic effort to put emphasis on the exclusive nature of Islam in order to achieve material goals.[44] This situation is also responsible for the religious stereotyping of Islam. Secondly, we have discussed that India's multicultural traditions have been strengthened at the court level by the likes of Akbar and Dara Shukoh, and at the popular level by the Sufis. Picking up the thread from the medieval Sufis, the custodians of folk Islam such as the folk singers and folk poets of colonial India tried to spread the message of love and humanity in the countryside. They were often persecuted for their liberal views. I have excluded folk Islam from my discussion because I have dealt with that aspect elaborately elsewhere.[45] Indeed, very few people knew Raja Rammohun or Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan in the nineteenth century, whereas folk singers and philosophers such as Lalan Shah had hundreds of thousands of followers in the countryside. In order to strengthen the legacy of India's multiculturalism, it is important to reserve a place for those folk philosophers both at the school and university curriculum. Thirdly, in Indian historiography initially there was an emphasis on political history. Later on economic history became important. These days many new subjects have emerged within the ambit of historical research, such as environment, medicine, science and technology, crime, gender, sports and some other topics. It is unfortunate that in a multi-religious and multicultural country like India the focus on theological discourses is inadequate.[46] As early as in the seventeenth century Dara Shukoh realized the importance

---

43. For the portion on Tagore I have consulted *Swadesh Samakal Granthamala* (Vol. 3) *Hindu-Musalman Samparka (A Collection of Tagore's Writings in Bengali)* compiled by Nityapriya Ghosh, published from Kolkata in 2003.

    S. Nurul Hasan, Religion State and Society in Medieval India. Introduced and edited by Satish Chandra (mentioned above).

    Satish Chandra, *Historiography, Religion and State in Medieval India.* (New Delhi, 1st reprint 1997, 2nd reprint 2001).

    Book number 2 and 3 are full of insights but not directly related to Tagore's philosophy. I have offered my own interpretations whenever I found that suitable.

44. Mukherjee, *Khusrau to Azad*, pp. 16-17.

45. Amit Dey, *Image of the Prophet*, chapter four.

46. Ibid., pp. 3-5.

of comparative theology. This legacy acquired a new dimension under Rammohun Roy, Keshub Chandra Sen and Bhai Girish Chandra Sen during the nineteenth century. However, in the twenty first century, not more than three or four important Institutions in India can offer any course on comparative theology. Certainly we are lagging far behind our western counterparts in exploring the ways towards strengthening multiculturalism.

Finally, let us wind up our discussion with a note of optimism relating to the creative role of the Indian ulema. In the aftermath of the Mumbai terrorist attacks in November 2008, the leading seminary *Dar-ul-Uloom* has taken an exemplary stance. It has suggested to Muslims in India not to slaughter cows on *Id-ul-Azha* as a mark of respect to the religious beliefs of Hindus. They received the backing of the All India Organization of Imams of Mosques (AIOIM) which had earlier asked Muslims to put black ribbons on their shoulders as a symbol of solidarity and grief for the victims of the Mumbai terrorist attacks. In a booklet elaborating the concept of *qurbani* (sacrifice) on the occasion of *Bakr-Id*, published by the Deoband-based *Dar-ul-Uloom*, the seminary has advised Muslims to refrain from cow slaughter to avoid hurting sentiments of the Hindus. Asking Muslims to respect the sentiments of other Indians, it has been argued in the booklet that 'They (Muslims) may slaughter other animals that are approved by the *Shariah*' (Canon law of Islam).[47] Established in the 1860s, *Dar-ul-Uloom* is the most respected school of Islamic teaching in the subcontinent.[48] AIOIM president Hazrat Moulana Jameel Ahmed Ilyasi said 'we should not do anything that will disturb communal harmony in the country'.[49] These are all positive developments. Similarly, Hindus should also learn to tolerate some of the habits and practices of their Muslim brethren.

We have seen the rational approach of a section of the Indian ulema towards cow slaughter and communal harmony in the twenty first century. It is interesting to note that pioneer Bengali Muslim writer Meer Mosharraf Hosain expressed similar views on similar issues in the second half of the nineteenth century and was ostracized in his own community for that. Unfortunately many leading historians of Bengal Renaissance have ignored that remarkable personality. It goes without saying that budding social scientists should try to rehabilitate such personalities from the abyss of oblivion to strengthen the legacy of India's multiculturalism.[50]

---

47. *The Statesman* (Kolkata) 6 December 2008, p. 3.

48. For details see Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband* 1860-1900, Princeton, 1982.

49. *The Statesman*, 6 December 2008.

50. Kazi Abdul Mannan (ed.), *Mosharraf Rachana Sambhar, Vol. V*, Dhaka, 1985, pp. 10-12, 15-16, 92-5, 250, 291. Amit Dey, *Image of the Prophet*, pp. 136-9.

Representations of African Nobility in Medieval India: Towards an Enabling Narrative

M.N. RAJESH AND J. LIMAINLAO

The west coast of India is the first region to be unravelled in early European travel writing on India as they came by sea and the themes that occupy importance in these travelogues are those related to trade and thus what follows is a description of the ports and the bustling cities.[1] Each city has its famous landmarks and in the city of Ahmedabad, the banyan tree carving in the Sidi Saiyed mosque is one such structure that has become one of the unofficial emblems of the city. The famed latticework (*jali*) in the mosque represents a banyan tree and it has also become the emblem of the famed Indian Institute of Management.[2] All tourists visiting the city get a lesson in history that this famous mosque was built by the African general Sultan Sidi Saiyed.[3] Far removed from this historical memory is the portrayal of this image in a decontextualized narrative where the thousands of people who look at this in text and the mass media and new media have no inkling of this grandiose symbol built by the African diaspora. In the larger 'racialized' imagination of the present, Africans out of Africa are almost always imagined as part of a labour diaspora or part of the early historic migrations and grouped under the label of 'tribal'[4] and the idea that Africans formed an elite group of kings, nobles, warriors, administrators, etc. in medieval India. It may sound as a counterfactual but is in fact true and goes against the grin of western historical discourse and an attempt is made here to offer an enabling and descriptive analysis of the Africans in medieval India much in the way medieval travellers to India experienced the African presence.

With the rise of the modern world and modern historical sense, the idea of objectivity based on scientific knowledge was also brought in and in doing so new categories and methods that were considered rational were introduced. As part of this discourse the nineteenth-century idea of science which employed a taxonomical system of classification of human societies based on categories such as 'race' inaugurated a hierarchy of societies.[5] Here certain societies were classified as barbarous, savage, etc. on a lower level of development. Even though the theories of race have now been disproved, the residual impact of this analytical category is high and has already coloured the narratives on non-western societies. Further,

1. Ram Chandra Prasad, *Early English Travellers in India*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1980.

2. http://www.iimahd.ernet.in/index.html.

3. Ward. *Gujarat-Daman-Diu: A Travel Guide*, Orient Blackswan, Hyderabad 1998, p. 23.

4. W.F. Arce and G.C. Alvarez, *Population Change in Southeast Asia*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1983, pp. 394-6, 405, 425.

5. Temjenwabang, *Perceiving the Savage in Historiography on Nagas*, unpublished MPhil dissertation, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad, 2005.

the edifices that were built by appending these categories also brought about the death of historical narratives of many societies as they were not considered scientific. To elaborate, the Rankean ideas of the three pillars of evidence, secular causation and anachronism did not apply to oral history and thus in one stroke the history of Africa was reduced to the anthropology of Africa because most of the histories of Africa were oral.[6]

Parallel to these developments in the heyday of imperialism was the slave-trade and the deprecation of Africa and its 'othering' in the historical discourse. Thus, Africans who participated in the historical discourse were cut off from their own past as it was deemed to be in the realm of myths and fables and the 'rational' European superiority that was asserted by the colonial knowledge and practices displaced these histories. In this heyday of slavery, the presence of Africans became noticeable in many parts of the world and the mention of African diaspora almost always evoked ideas of forced emigration.[7] The counter-narrative discourse in the post-colonial period in Africa and also among the African diaspora tried to trace the glory of Africa in the distant past to the achievements of Egypt. The received understanding of this genre of writings was that most of the achievements were also reported as myths and were under rigorous scrutiny and hence dismissed as unhistorical and also as Afrocentricism.[8] One point of these discourses was that Africans outside Africa were all enslaved people or in similar capacities which did not augur well as a narrative as it always spoke of them, as an exploited class represented as passive agents and this subjectivity was extended to the African diaspora as they were classified predominantly as victim or refugee diasporas.[9] Similarly the encyclopedia of African diaspora also follows on these lines and accords the same space to the entries on Siddis whereas they are the only African diaspora to become part of royalty and hence need elaboration.[10] The picture of the African diaspora in India is far removed from this representation as their histories reveal which is done in the following pages.

In contrast to the historiography, we have historical evidence that Africans were distinctly noble in medieval Deccan and western India and occasionally in other parts of India. Based on contemporary material, this paper tries to posit a historical narrative that is 'enabling' and also at the same time historical. Proceeding on these lines, this article thus examines the contributions of African nobles in administration and various capacities in the Indian subcontinent. In the history of Sidi studies we notice that there has been mention

---

6. Stephen Ellis, 'Writing Histories of Contemporary Africa', *The Journal of African History* 43(1), 1 January 2002, p. 22-4.

7. C.E.B. Davies, *Encyclopedia of the African Diaspora: Origins, Experiences, and Culture*, 3 Volume set, ABC-CLIO, Santa Barbara, Calif, 2008.

8. M. Lefkowitz, *Not Out of Africa: How 'Afrocentrism' Became an Excuse to Teach Myth as History* (Reprint edition), New York: Basic Books, 1997.

9. R. Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, Routledge, 2008, p. 178.

10. C.E.B. Davies, op. cit., p. 840-1.

on Sidis in many important works on the Marathas and the Portuguese like *The Cambridge History of India* (1922-37) or even earlier in James Grant Duff's *History of the Marathas*, but they are all scattered references and the first important and large scale work is Joseph Harris's seminal work titled, *The African Presence in Asia: Consequences of the East African Slave Trade* (1971) and Tamaskar's book on Malik Ambar.[11] The three other important works are Shanti Sadiq Ali's *The African Dispersal in the Deccan*, a proper historical work focusing on the spread of the African communities with the ebbs and flows of patronage. Siddi studies have also been enriched by two other works, one by K.K. Prasad and J.P. Angenot (2008) titled *TADIA, the African Diaspora in Asia: Explorations on a Less Known Fact* which examines Siddi life in all its aspects up to the present day and is concerned with matters of adaptation and identity. Another work of this genre is by A. Catlin-Jairazbhoy and E.A. Alpers, titled, *Sidis and Scholars : Essays on African Indians* (2004). It would be out of place if one did not mention the work of Pashington Obeng: *Shaping Membership, Defining Nation: The Cultural Politics of African Indians in South Asia* (2007).

A new space was breached by the work of Shihan de Silva Jayasuriya, and J.P. Angenot, (2008), *Uncovering the History of Africans in Asia*. That has emerged as a compulsory reading on this area since it traces the diverse regions and the emergence of Africans in different capacities in these multiple contexts. The piece de resistance is however K.X. Robbins and J. McLeod's (2006), *African Elites in India: Habshi Amarat*. As the title suggests the book does justice to the title and goes on a journey focusing largely on Hyderabad, Janjir and Scahin with rich illustrations that make the royalty come alive in colour and also visualize the opulent courts and ceremonials of India.

Apart from these books scholarship on Indian medieval and modern imperial history scarcely discusses the significant issues of African Indians and their roles in restructuring alliances, redefining themselves and contributing to the development of Indian kingdoms. This article helps clarify and develop a conceptual framework for understanding the geo-social, economic, cultural, and religious displacements experienced by individuals and groups based on colour, class, religion, and gender. The history of the African Indians since medieval times shows that, in spite of the fact that they have always been regarded as foreigners and a minority, they have adjusted to India by playing critical roles as military leaders, regents, rulers and have contributed to the polities of their communities. The religious experience and cultural practices of African Indians provide a context for understanding ways in which religion and culture become a contested locus for creating and re-creating a 'counter-hegemonic world view' and generating new meaning systems for themselves and other Indians.[12]

---

11. Amy Catlin-Jairazbhoy and Edward A. Alpers 'Introduction', *Sidis and Scholars: Essays on African Indians*, Red Sea Press, 2004, p. 14-15.

12. Helene Basu and Pnina Werbner, *Embodying Charisma: Modernity, Locality and the Performance of Emotion in Sufi Cults*, London, Routledge, 1998, p. 117.

As early as the thirteenth century, the evidence of India's contact with Africa is clearly exhibited. A number of chroniclers like Mihaj-us-Siraj, Ghulam Hussain, and Ibn Batuta mentioned the people of Abyssinia who had risen to the heights of political power. One of the results of the slave trade from East Africa was the transportation of considerable numbers of Ethiopians to India where some Indian rulers employed them as soldiers and palace guards. These men often organized as powerful military factions who played decisive roles in local politics which was itself fluid and thus the identities were also flexible. Many were brought to India from East Africa from the sixteenth century until the latter part of the seventeenth century.[13] Pankhurst estimated the export of the Ethiopian slaves, which conveys the significance of Ethiopia and establishes its demographic significance. Black slaves from the coastal strip of Ethiopia to Mozambique were carried by Arab slave-traders to various parts of the Muslim world including India. Their presence is recorded since the early establishment of Muslim rule during the sultanate of Delhi. Muslim Africans, referred to in India as *Habshis*[14] or the people of *Habush* (Abyssinia), were frequently elevated to the rank of generals, administrators and kingmakers. In some cases, they became kings. Another reason for this was also because of the fact the slavery prevalent in medieval Islam was very different from the slavery of classical antiquity or the trans-Atlantic slavery. Even today in Saudi Arabia slavery is not such a great issue given the fact that slavery was legal till 1960 and many ex-slaves have integrated themselves into the society. The same is also true of nearby countries like Bahrain roughly from 1960-70. One of the noticeable differences was that the slaves after manumission could reach great heights or even be simply absorbed as common members of the society and this practice continued till recently.[15] The Mamluk dynasty that ruled in Delhi (1206-1526) was of largely manumitted slaves and in the case of Qutubuddin Aibak there is a lack of consensus regarding his status as historians have divergent opinions and scholars like R.P. Tripathi and Habibullah state that he was not the sovereign ruler as was technically a slave and was not manumitted.[16] While these differences are hair-splitting and thus prompt us to undertake a nuance reading of the sources, the larger picture is that the technicalities are not very significant and rigid regarding the question of status. The Mamluks, who were known as the slave dynasty and ruled Delhi with many slave kings sitting on the Imperial throne as Sultans and having managed to assert their authority and get the same accepted and legitimized was an important political development in medieval India thus pointing to a new political culture. Far more important in our case

---

13. Richard Pankhurst, *An Introduction to the Economic History of Ethiopia from Early Times to 1800*, London, Lalibela House, 1961, p. 17.

14. Indians of African descent, claim their origin from Ethiopia, a claim that has evidence in the history of the East Africans migratory process to India.

15. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abolition_of_slavery_timeline#1900.E2.80.93present.

16. Rekha Pande, *Succession in the Delhi Sultanate*, Commonwealth Publishers, New Delhi, 1990, p. 41.

is the fact that Africans could become part of this political culture and thus rise to great heights based on personal military capacities.

Despite the importance of these slaves, Indian records give very little information about their number. The Indian chronicles, which described *Habshis'* activities, have paid little attention to their origins. Since the slaves were separated from other members of their ethnic group, they quickly lost contact with their birthplace. It is also impossible to identify the nationality of the *Habshis* by their names. Upon their conversion to Islam, the *Habshis* were given Muslim-Arab names, which made the effort of identifying their origins difficult.[17]

One of the early episodes of the *Habshi* presence in India was in the case of Queen Raziya, the sovereign of the sultanate of Delhi, who befriended an enslaved African named Jamal-ud-din Yaqut. She later appointed Yaqut to the post of royal stable master. This fact angered the Turkish overlords who rebelled against her, eventually killing her *Habshi* companion and overthrowing Raziya.[18]

During the late 1400s, Africans in northern India and Bengal organized and asserted considerable political power. Rukn-ud-din Barbak, the king of Bengal (1459-74) is said to have been the first Indian king to promote many previously enslaved Africans to high rank. It is estimated that he had eight thousand African slave soldiers in his army. One of the pictures that we get from examining this episode in detail is that the *Habshis* were already recognized as a power elite and not just equated with soldiers but looked on as people with administrative capacity capable of overthrowing the kingdom and these fears were not unfounded. Barbak's successor, Yusuf Shah also created a cadre of 5,000 Bengali *Paik* (foot soldiers) and also local eunuchs and they killed the Ilyas ruler in 1486. In this vacuous situation where there was a premium on military strategy and power, the *Habshis* under Malik Andil captured power and established rule at Gaur and reigned there for some years.[19] Another important political development took place when Habesh Khan, the king of Bengal, became dictatorial leading to acclimate of discontent and Sidi Badr, an African guardsman, seized the throne in 1490. Badr ruled for more than three years under the title of Shams-ud-din Abu Nasr Muzaffar Shah. He had an army of thirty thousand, of which five thousand were Africans of Ethiopian descent. When he was deposed and murdered in 1493 by Alauddin Hassan Shah, the Africans in high posts were dismissed and expelled from the kingdom. This marked the end of the African dynasty in Bengal.[20] After the fall of the dynasty most of the *Habshis* were exiled and moved to Gujarat and Deccan and from then on we do not have any references to them in contemporary literature of Bengal.

---

17. Astair Gebremariam Mengesha, 'The Habshis', *International Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 1(1): 91-102, (Summer/Fall 2003).

18. Rekha Pande, op. cit., pp. 58-62.

19. A. Andre Wink, *Indo-Islamic Society: 14th-15th Centuries*, BRILL, 2004, p. 139.

20. R.C. Majumdar, *The History and Culture of the Indian People: The Delhi Sultanate*, Bombay, MacMillan, 1960, pp. 345-6.

Deccan and Gujarat are the main regions with a *Habshi* presence that is noticeable till day but the paradoxical situation of the *Habshis* also mirrors the fate of many classes who were once dependent on royal patronage. In Deccan and Gujarat the Africans are known by the name of Sidi or Siddi, the latter being more popular in Deccan.

During the Deccan Kingdoms (1373-1702), Mujahid Shah (1373-77) initiated the practice of employing foreigners in state service.[21] The presence and evidence of the gallant *Habshi*s are stamped in the structure of Golconda Fort. The structures are known as *Habshikamans* and are excellent examples of arched structures that house rooms on top and the roads lead to the graves of the Abyssinian soldiers who died fighting the Mughals.[22] This was a decisive moment in the history of Hyderabad as the Mughal invasion and opposition to this invasion shaped the identity of Hyderabad and established its distance from the Mughals. This is also one of the examples of the bravery of the African warriors being commemorated in stone and the emphasis is on their bravery and loyalty û two qualities that ensured a success in Deccan. As Stewart Gordon notes that becoming a mercenary was the most important entrepreneurial activity in medieval India and thus the field was wide open and the *Habshis* were one of the ideal candidates for the same as the case of Deccan shows.[23] There were also a number of *Habshis*, who raised themselves to the status of rulers in Deccan. For example, Ibrahim Nizam Shah (1595-96) was a ruler whose mother was an Ethiopian. Ahang (Nehang) Khan was the Abyssinian chief of a small state feudatory to Ahmadnagar in 1586, when Akbar was seeking to conquer Ahmadnagar. He went into retirement when the Mughal annexed the state.

It is the name of Malik Amber (1549-1626) a prominent *Habshi* general and minister who successfully defeated the Mogul forces and established Murtaza Nizam Shah II (1603-30), as a nominal ruler in the region south of Ahmadnagar that has become an important referent for the *Habshis* of medieval India. The flow of Ethiopian slaves to India continued for another two centuries and played important roles in the affairs of some states. It was during the 1300 that the first Muslim invasions of Maharashtra and the other parts of the Deccan took place under the leadership of Ala-ud-din Khilji. Malik Ambar was also the pioneer of guerrilla warfare called in Deccan as *bargi-giri* and was successful in three aspects one, as a military strategist, two, as an adept tactician who forged alliances and thirdly or most importantly as an able administrator who governed large tracts of Ahmednagar with great efficiency.[24] It was the constant success of Malik Ambar that unsettled the Mughal Emperor Jahangir so much that he had a painting commissioned wherein he stands on top of a globe befitting a universal ruler and shoots an arrow at

---

21. Pankhurst, op. cit., p. 413.

22. Mengsha, op. cit., p. 94.

23. Richard. M. Eaton, *A Social History of the Deccan, 1300-1761: Eight Indian Lives*, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 127.

24. Richard M. Eaton, op. cit., p. 127.

the severed head of Malik Ambar that is mounted on the tip of a spear. This reveals the invincibility of Malik Ambar and the Mughal imperial obsession and failure to oust this powerful ruler.[25]

The Mughal invasion fostered religious and political turmoil in the Deccan and was a period when African soldiers come to light in the historical records. From the beginning of the *Bahmani* Empire in the Deccan, Africans served as mercenaries fighting for or against various political and military powers. Later when there were struggles between the *Dakhani* (Muslim longtimers) and the *Afaqis* (Muslim newcomers), the Africans were found to have forged alliances with the *Dakhanis*, who were Sunnis, against the *Afaqis*, who were Shias.[26] After settling in the Deccan, Africans incorporated some local practices into their expression of Sunni Islam.

During the rule of the Nizams (1605-1964), the *Habshis* were treated very well because of their military skills and trustworthiness, which later earned the *Habshis* the confidence of the Nizam who appointed them as his bodyguards. As military elite, they enjoyed a much higher status and class and were given respect despite their colour and distinct physical characteristics. As a result of local conflicts, successive disturbances erupted between the *Habshi* and those around them. Due to the mounting tensions, Nizam the sixth moved them to an area called Risala Haboosh, which was sometimes referred to as the settlements of A.C. Guards (African Cavalry Guards). The Seventh Nizam, Mir Osman Ali Khan erected new houses for the *Habshis* and they were merged with the other units and renamed the Nizam bodyguards. The new area in which the *Habshi* settled later came to be known as Siddi Risala (African Cavalry). As military men of considerable prosperity, high rank and popular with the Nizams, local Muslims drew closer to them and some even offered their daughters in marriage to the *Habshis*. Under the Nizam's instruction, the sons of the *Habshis* were trained in military skills to follow in their fathers' footstep.

The rule of the Nizam ended in 1948 and the *Habshis* were faced with an uncertain situation. Their importance in society declined when the Indian government passed the Police Action, which dissolved the Nizam's legitimacy as a source of authority.[27] The government allotted houses and they were retired from the service and given pensions. A number of them sold their property and moved to other cities while many others remained in Siddi Risala. Those who stayed in the settlement made their living by performing musical performances. Although assimilated into the Indian subculture considerably, they have managed to maintain certain aspects of their African heritage and this is seen particularly through their music.

25. Ibid., p. 121.

26. Pashington Obeng, 'Religion and Empire: Belief and Identity among African Indians of Karnataka, South India,' *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 71(1): 99-120, March 2003.

27. Astair Gebremariam Mengesha, op. cit., p. 94.

The island of Janjira is located off the west coast of India about forty-five miles south of Bombay. The descendants of the Nawabs of Janjira, and the people of the town—once a principality near Mumbai and in the neighbouring state of Gujarat, in Sachin, another principality, has an integral connection between the Nawabs of the two states, their descendants and the Sufi saint, for over 600 years: they all have African roots in them. Janjira and Sachin have a close connection in history: after renouncing his rights to the throne of Janjira, Sidi Mohammad Abdul Karim Khan established the Sachin state in Gujarat in 1791. He was given the title of Nawab and founded a dynasty that ruled over a mostly Hindu population. Sachin had its own cavalry and state band that included Africans, its coats of arms, currency, and stamped paper.[28]

As a fortress on the sea Janjira holds a special place and the approach is by water which in the medieval period was infested with pirates and the African sailors provided security to this waterway is attested by Ibn Batuta.[29] Janjira is especially considered as one of the best specimens of naval fort architecture. Well-conceived and well-defended, it was never conquered, though attacked dozens of times. The Sidi dynasty ruled over the island for 330 years. According to one account, the first conqueror of the island, in 1489, was an Ethiopian. Another Ethiopian, Sidi Yaqut Khan, is said to have been appointed officer in charge of the mainland in the late 1400s. The three-mile island of Janjira is entirely surrounded by a formidable fortress of 22 rounded fortresses whose walls are 80-feet high.

Besides appearing in written documents, the Africans have been immortalized in the rich paintings of different eras, states, and styles that form an important component of Indian culture. Because of their high positions, they were captured in vivid and exquisite portraits as principal subjects or in the immediate vicinity of non-African rulers. *Africans in India* features dramatically stunning photographic reproductions of some of these paintings. As rulers, city planners, and architects the Sidis have left an impressive historical and architectural legacy that attest to their determination, skills, and intellectual, cultural, military and political ability. The imposing forts, mosques, mausoleums, and other edifices they built, some more than 500 years ago, still grace the Indian landscape. From the beginning, some Africans carved out princely states completely with their own coats of arms, armies, mints, and stamps. They fiercely defended them from powerful enemies well into the twentieth century when, with another 600 princely states, they were integrated into the Indian state.

From medieval times to the present, African Indians have lived and adjusted under different dynastic and imperial systems. During those regimes, African Indians have created

---

28. Shanti Sadiq Ali, *The African Dispersal in the Deccan: From Medieval to Modern Times*, Orient Blackswan, Hyderabad, 1996, p. 188.

29. Edward A. Alpers, *Africans in India and the Wider Context of the Indian Ocean*, p. 31 in Catlin-Jairazbhoy, A., and Alpers, E.A. Sidis and Scholars: *Essays on African Indians*, Red Sea Press, 2004.

and preserved aspects of their culture, religion, and identities. At some times they asserted their influence in the military, social, and political spheres by stressing their racial identity. On other occasions, they contributed their services as agricultural labourers, basket weavers, domestics, drivers, and social workers. All this human activity has taken place within state and national boundaries, where there have been both overt and unstated ways of ordering social relations and of putting people into groups and sub-groups. African Indians have further utilized their patterns of social interaction both to challenge dominant systems and to replicate aspects of the social and religious ranking in India in ways that meet their own needs. Within caste and class structures reminiscent of imperial regimes, African Indians have created avenues of minority national identities to assert, reassert, and deploy their own agency. Today the legacy of Africans is mainly forgotten in a country where historical consciousness is not very high and the remnants of the African presence are seen mainly in the monuments and the places like Siddi Risala, Siddiamber Bazar, etc. in Hyderabad and other places. One of the distinct survivals of African identity is the music and the regular advertisements of the *marfa* bands one sees in Hyderabad is a pointer to the local patronage of Siddi culture.[30] They are mainly played during marriages and also during political campaigns. The *daff* is the drum of the Siddis and this is a small drum and the main cultural element of the Siddi musical life. Historically the *daff* was linked to royalty and aristocracy and was played under the Nizam's patronage in festivals and marriages to slow beats but due to popular demand the beats have become fast.[31]

One of the points of emphasis is that the historical material for the rehabilitation of the Africans in medieval India offers us a new way of looking at the role of Africans as part of an extended minority rather than the binaries of majority/minority and as part of a series of extended minorities, the Africans could leverage their positions and rise to the role of royalty. With many aspects of their history being obliterated and a hazy historical memory survivals of the African culture among the Sidis are found in music. The article concludes by saying that there is still a vast scope for research on this topic and one of the important directions in this regard that would yield large results is the use of music as this is one of the cultural resources of the African diaspora that has been an enduring source of identity as forcefully argued by Ingrid Monsoon in his study of African diasporic cultures.

---

30. J.S. Ifthekhar 'Marfa' band of the Siddis 'losing' its beat The Hindu, Hyderabad, July 10. Link http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Hyderabad/marfa-band-of-the-siddis-losing-its-beat/article2216021.ece

31. Rekha Pande, *A Socio-Cultural Profile of Siddi Women in Hyderabad*, p. 194 in Prasad, K.K., and Angenot, J.P. TADIA, the African Diaspora in Asia: Explorations on a Less Known Fact. Jana Jagrati Prakashana on behalf the Tadia Society, 2008.

Ottoman Turkish Maritime History: The Case for Bengal

RILA MUKHERJEE

Coastal Bengal, fronting the northern Bay of Bengal, welcomed Turkish sailors, adventurers, rulers and merchants to its shores throughout history (Fig. 1). As we know, 'Bengal' comprised the state of West Bengal in India and the sovereign state of Bangladesh until 1947, and in the eighteenth century it incorporated Bihar and a part of Orissa as well. So it was a largish kingdom with access to maritime routes through the Bay and to overland routes into Central Asia through its land and fluvial routes into Nepal, Tibet and Nan Zhao in Yunnan, now within China.
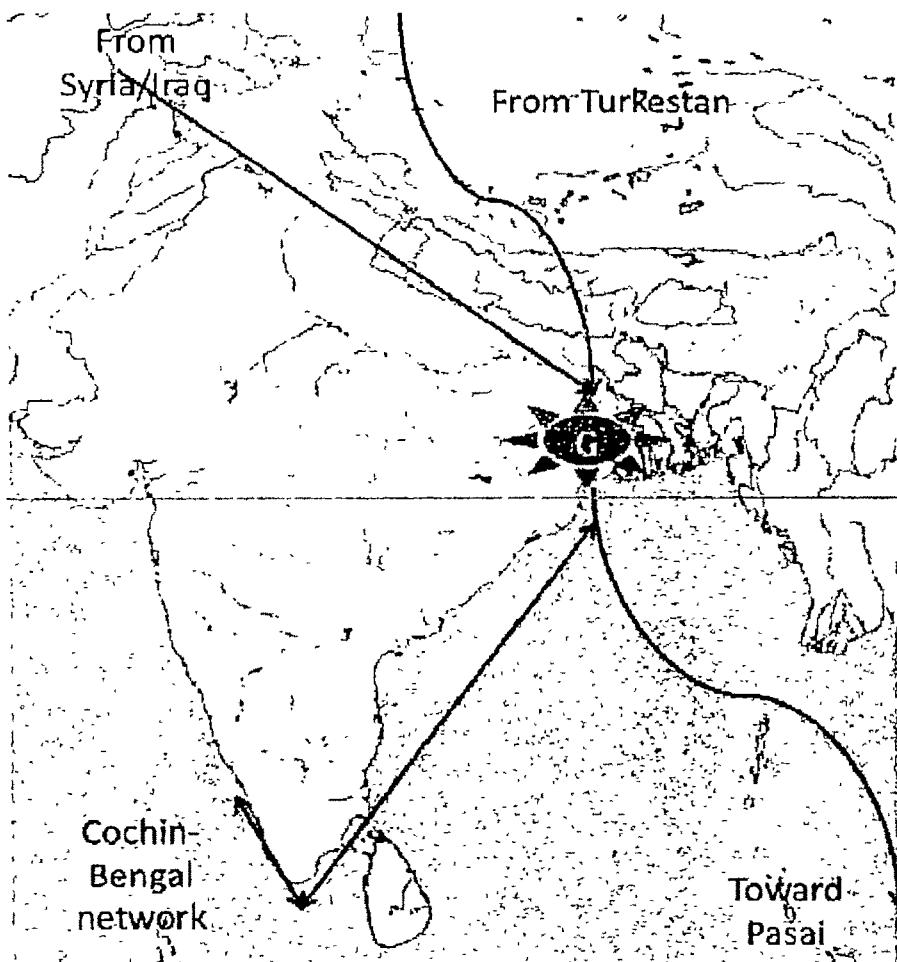

Figure 1: Routes of Turuska/Turkish Migration into Bengal.
G stands for Gauda and then Gaur

I

We trace at least four migratory cycles of both the pre-Ottomans and Ottomans into Bengal. First is the *turuska* (Sanskrit) migratory phase. *Turuska* resonates in Bengal's history from the seventh-eighth centuries and we assume that successive waves of Turkic peoples migrated from Central Asia from that time.

The term is ambiguous, being used either for a people (race?) or provenance, and both are shadowy. First used in Bana's *Harsa Charita* (seventh century CE), this term may have referred also to '*Tajika*' (Pahlavi *Tazig*, or Arab *Tayyi* or old Parthian), or '*Saka*' (Huns), and also perhaps to '*Yavana*' (Greeks) and '*Parasika*' (Sassanian Persians) as well, as seen from the fourteenth century Vilasa grant of Pralaya Nayaka of Andhra Pradesh. *Turuska* may also have referred to Tibetans as also to the Shahiyas of Kabul, and its frequent usage suggests that it is unlikely that the term *turuska* referred to a single ethnicity.[1]

From the eighth-ninth centuries *turuska* are mentioned as political adversaries.[2] During the seventh-eighth centuries Tibet, its people sometimes also referred to as *turuska*, claimed to have conquered Bengal beyond the Karatoya River in the northeast to the Ganga. It has been suggested that the early Pala kings may have been subordinate to Tibet and we hear of people of Tibetan or Yunnanese origin, the Khambojas, temporarily taking power over the Bengali capital Lakhsmanawati (Lakhnawati) or Gaur in the tenth century.[3] Were these, too, seen as *turuska*? These were almost certainly ethnic Turks before conversion to Islam and the 'Yavana king' of *c.* the very early ninth century Khalimpur plate of Dharmapala of Bengal that refers to the installation of the king of Kanyakubja by Dharmapala may have been a *turuska*, suggesting that *turuska* rulers were now being included in the list of formidable rulers of northern and central India.[4]

There is now evidence that long before the establishment of the Turkish Sultanate of Delhi in 1206, *turuskas* started figuring on the political horizons of several rulers on the subcontinent, suggesting that their numbers had swelled, and we have more evidence of *turuska* rule in Bengal. Taranath writes that even before the Ghorid invasion, and at the time when the Sena king Lakshman Sena ruled Bengal in the twelfth century, small bands of *turuskas* were·entrenched in *bhati* or estuarine Bengal as small rulers, and that these once

---

1. Brajadulal Chattopadhya, 'Images of Raiders and Rulers', in Meenakshi Khanna ed. *Cultural History of Medieval India*, New Delhi: Social Science Press, 2007, pp. 101-25, see pp. 102, 108.

2. Ibid. pp. 108-09.

3. Andre Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo Islamic World*, vol. 1, Early Medieval India and the Expansion of Islam, Seventh to Eleventh Centuries, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 265-6.

4. Brajadulal Chattopadhya, 'Images', pp. 108-09.
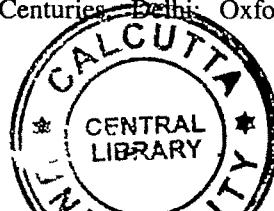
waged war on Magadha.[5] This migratory wave occurred by land and not sea and, therefore, the overland links between Central Asia and Bengal are privileged in this migratory wave.

But migration occurred through the sea-lanes as well. By the ninth century Muslim traders, often referred to as Arabs or sometimes as *turuskas*, were found at the port of Chattagrama/Chittagong in the southeastern Bengal delta (*bhati*) and the Bengali dialect spoken at that port-city even today contains a very large number of Turkish words. The widespread usage of the term *turuska* has left a linguistic legacy in the Sanskrit language: for example, the camphor known as *turuska-karpura* and the classical *raga* in Indian music known as *turuska-gauda*.

II

The second phase of Turkish migration occurred from the time of the Ghorid conquest of northern and central India in 1192-3 and the subsequent movement of Turks into both independent and subordinate Bengal throughout the life-term of the Delhi Sultanate until 1526, when the Mughals overthrew the Lodis in north India.

Muhammad of Ghor or Muizz al Din conquered North India with his Turkish cavalry and reportedly said, when he was commiserated on having no sons as successor, 'let other sultans have a son or two. I have several thousand sons—Turkish slaves whose inheritance will be my kingdom...'.[6] His successor at Delhi was the Turkish slave Qutb al Din Aybeg and after that Iltutmish (1210-36) who actually laid the foundations of the Sultanate and who deliberately attracted Muslim notables from Arab lands and Bukhara.[7] One of his closest confidantes was Malik Ala ud Din Jani, Shahzada i Turkistan, who was for more than a year Governor of Lakhnawati in Bengal (when the Bengal Sultanate was conquered by Iltutmish and brought under the Delhi Sultanate) and who issued coins in his name from Bengal, according to Abdul Karim.[8]

III

The third migratory cycle occurred simultaneously with the second one. This third clearly discernible and very active migration heralded the Islamicization of Bengal when Turkish

---

5. *Taranath's History of Buddhism in India*, Chattopadhyaya, Debiprasad, ed., Lama Chimpa and Alaka Chattopadhyaya, tr., New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990, rpt., pp. 294-5, 330, 443-4. If this is indeed correct, we need to revise our chronology of Muslim rule in Bengal, which starts conventionally in 1206.

6. Juzjani cited in Peter Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate: A Political and Military History*, Cambridge, CUP, 2003, p. 31.

7. Peter Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, p. 41.

8. Abdus Salam tr. *Riyaz us Salatin* of Ghulam Husain Salim, Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1902, pp. 73-4; Abdul Karim, *Banglar Itihas: Sultani Amal*, Dhaka: Jatiya Shatitya Prakash, 2007, 2013 (in Bangla), pp. 119-20.

migrants established the Bengal Sultanate in 1203 and their dependants fanned out all over Bengal in various capacities.[9] This wave too occurred through land and fluvial routes. (See Fig. 2) At that time, there was evidently already a *turuska* presence in Bengal and along the Bay of Bengal littoral.
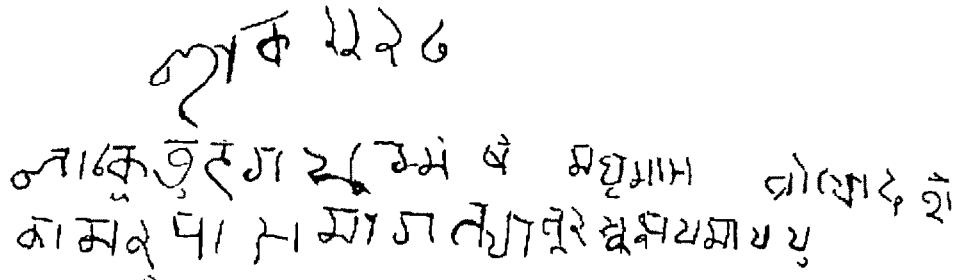
1. A Sanskrit inscription dated Saka 1127 (1206) on a rock in Kamrup about two miles northeast of Gauhati city on the north bank of the Brahmaputra river in Assam. It commemorates the drowing in the river of invading Turkish troops under the command of Bkhtiyar Khilji on their return from an abortive campaign in Tibet. The text runs as follows: Śak 1127/ Śāka turaga yugmeśe. Madhumaśe troydośe./ Kamarupa samagatya. Turushka kshayamayyu. ("In Saka 1127, on the thirteenth of the month of honey [i.e. the month of Chaitra]/upon arriving in Kamrupa, the Turks perished."

Figure 2 : Sanskrit inscription recording Bakhtiar Khilji's abortive invasion of Kamarupa in 1206. Note the use of the term *turuska* (From Siddiq 1990: 84)

The Turkish Sultanate, known also as the rule of the Turko-Afghans, lasted from the thirteenth century to the middle of the sixteenth century when the Afghans and then the Mughals overthrew the Turkish Sultanate. It is during this period that links with what are clearly discernible as Mamluk Egypt and Turkey were forged. Closer ties with Turkestan were also forged at this time.[10]

Just as Taranath had asserted that *turuska* had carved out chiefdoms in *bhati*, a recent French study of Pasai by Guillot and Kalus has brought to light a 'minor' 'Bengali-Turkish' dynasty ruling at Pasai from *c.*1340 to 1390. Guillot and Kalus estimate that these were Turks who were probably soldiers and small adventurers in Bengal and who had utilized the maritime network to escape from Ilyas Shahi rule in Bengal to Pasai. They were progressively pushed eastward - and seawards - by the political turmoil resulting from the reunification of the three provinces of Lakhnawati, Suvarnagrama and Saptagrama into a unified Bengal by Shams al-din Ilyas Shah by 1352. This picture fits Taranath's assertion that there were

---

9. See R.M. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204-1760*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, paperback edition, 1996; Abdul Karim, *Banglar Itihas*; Yousuf Siddique, 'The Diffusion of Islam In Bengal and The Articulation of A New Order', *JRSP*, 45, 2, 2008, pp. 1-54. We should note that the personnages migrating to Bengal to join service under the Bengal sultans and even the founder of a new dynasty often claimed a spurious lineage from either Fars or Turkestan when in reality they were often low caste Bengali Muslims. See the case of Sultan Ala ud Din Husain Shah who was either from Tormuz (Tirmiz, Termuz) in Turkestan or a lowly cowherd from Chandpur in West Bengal, see Abdul Karim, *Banglar Itihas*, pp. 303-7.

10. Abdul Karim, *Banglar Itihas*.

small bands of *turuskas* ruling from earlier in *bhati*. Were these Turks now being displaced by the emerging Muslim state of Bengal?

The 'Bengali-Turkish' dynasty lasted until the end of the fourteenth century when Zayn al-Abidin I restored the rightful dynasty at Pasai.[11] This particular phase of Turkish expansion took place by the maritime route from Bengal to Pasai, a route that was a commercial and cultural route and evidently a popular one.

In the fourteenth century, when Ibn Batutta boated down the Meghna River on his visit to Hazrat Shah Jalal who had settled in Srihatta from either Konya or the Hadramaut (this is not certain), he saw water wheels, gardens and villages such as those along the banks of the Nile in Egypt. We must ask ourselves: was this a case of some long forgotten technological link with Arabia?[12] The canal system at the sixteenth century capital of Bengal at Gaur too was deemed akin to that in Egypt.[13] There were definitely Mamluk Egypt-Bengal links and once the Ottomans defeated the Mamluk state in 1517 such links were likely to be strengthened.

It is, therefore, also likely that Ottoman-Bengal commercial relations developed from this time. Cesare Frederici, visiting Bengal in the second half of the sixteenth century (*c.*1567), wrote that Gaur had its own port, although he did not name it, but we may perhaps suppose it to be Saptagrama, the Portuguese Porto Pequeno, a river-port that according to him traded with Syria, Turkey, Arabia and Yemen.[14]

Bengal became part of the Islamic cultural world and of the diverse networks spawned by it. A list of Sufis, *darbeshs*, *pirs* and *faqirs* in Srihatta (now in Bangladesh) reads like a list of who's who of some 158 personages from the Islamic world, displaying networks between southeastern Bengal, Yemen, Turkestan and Baghdad.[15] Turkish architectural conventions are observable in the mosques of Gaur and Pandua, particularly at Adina Mosque at the latter. It is also worth mentioning that Turkish engineers involved in both civil (road and canal construction) and military spheres (artillery, bridges, forts) were mentioned for Bengal by the seventeenth century, as elsewhere in the subcontinent, suggesting that Turkish professionals were now migrating as well.

Next, let us see the traces of the Turkish presence in Bengal, taking calligraphy as example. *Tughra* is mainly known through the imperial examples of beautiful monograms and signatures from the sultans of the Ottoman Empire. This style was adopted in Bengal

11. Claude Guillot and Ludvik Kalus, *Les Monuments Funeraires et l 'Histoire du Sulatanat de Pasai a Sumatra, Cahiers d' Archipel*, 37, Paris, 2008, pp. 69, 71-4, 118.

12. David Ludden, 'Investing in Nature around Sylhet: An Excursion into Geographical History,' *Economic and Political Weekly*, 29 November 2003, pp. 5080-88, see p. 5082.

13. H. Creighton, *The Ruins of Gour etc.*, London: Black, Parbury & Allen, 1817, pp. 1-10.

14. Cesare Frederici, *Voyage*.

15. Muhammad Abdul Shukkur Barbhuinya, *Baraker Pir Faqir*, Sichar: Aarshi Prakashani, 2008, in Bangla.

as well. However, it has been noted that the 'Bengali *tughra* (calligraphy) resembles more closely versions from Mamluk Egypt',[16] gradually losing its popularity in Bengal in the mid-sixteenth century and ceding place to '*Nastaœliq* as a result of the growing influence of Persian culture after the advent of the Mughals to the region'.[17] (See Fig. 3)
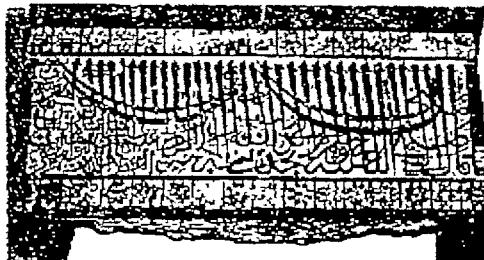
16. An Arabic inscription from the reign of Sultan Husain Shah of Bengal, dated 907 (1501) in typical Bengali *tughra* style. The text reads: "The prophet, peace and the blessings of God be upon him, said, 'For whoever builds a mosque on earth, God will build seventy palaces in paradise. The sultan of the period and the age, the highness of the world and the faith, the victorious Husain Shah the sultan built [it] in the year 907 [1501]." Varendra Research Museum, Rajshahi, Bangladesh.

Figure-3 : Bengali *Tughra* style (From Siddiq 1990 : 95)

IV

Yet another wave—the fourth one—of Ottoman expansion into Bengal occurred around the middle of the sixteenth century; leading us to speculate that the shadowy early *turuska* had transformed into the definitive category of *turki* and *turani* by that time. While *turki* is more precise, *turani* is quite vague, being a geographical identity referring to peoples from Central Asia, more precisely north of the Oxus and, therefore, neighbours of the Persians or Iranis. It was also a linguistic identity. In time *turani* was equated with 'Turk' in Indian history.

In the sixteenth century the largely informal presence of the Turkish elements in Bengal transformed into a more formal one. It is well known that many Ottomans and Persians migrated to India in search of career opportunities from the sixteenth century onward.[18]

---

16. Mohammad Yusuf Siddiq, 'An Epigraphical Journey to an Eastern Islamic Land', *Muqarnas*, vol. 7, 1990, pp. 83-108, see p. 94.

17. Mohammad Yusuf Siddiq, 'Calligraphy and Islamic culture: reflections on some new epigraphical discoveries in Gaur and Pandua, two early capitals of Muslim Bengal', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. 68, no. 1, 2005, pp. 21-58, see p. 34.

18. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Persianization and 'Mercantilism' in Bay of Bengal History, 1400-1700', in Sanjay Subrahmanyam (ed.), *Explorations in Connected History: From the Tagus to the Ganges*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005. Also in Om Prakash and Denys Lombard, eds., *Commerce and Culture in the Bay of Bengal 1500-1800*, New Delhi: Manohar/ ICHR, 1999, pp. 47-85.

Subrahmanyam points to the defection of Ottoman officials to the Mughal court, tracing the career of one Husain Pasha Afrasiyab, the Ottoman governor of Basra in the 1660s who subsequently made his career in the Dakhin as Islam Khan Rumi in Mughal service.[19]

Until 1555, that is during the reigns of Babur and Humayun the 'Turanis', an Iranian term for men of Turkish origin, dominated the Mughal court, after which Akbar incorporated both elements in keeping with Mughal policy of adopting Persian mores. But during Akbar's successor's—Jahangir's—reign, persianization increased and the Irani faction predominated at Delhi, Agra and Fatehpur Sikri.[20]

But this was not a happy union. The Mughal court was torn by the factions of the Turanis and Iranis—both equally powerful and ambitious and thereby exercising a check and balance function against the excesses of the Mughals—so much so that Akbar, the greatest of the Mughals, had to depend on indigenous, largely Rajput elements such as the nobles Man Singh and Raja Todar Mal. The figures in Tables 1 and 2 are revealing of the waning Turkish influence at the Mughal court. Although numerically superior until 1620 (Table 1), it is clear that by Jahangir's reign in the seventeenth century the Iranis and not Turanis held the most important political offices (Table 2). The Turanis now migrated from Delhi in search of new career opportunities.

Table 1 : Racial Distribution of Nobility at Mughal Court in Sixteenth-Early Seventeenth Centuries Calculated from Afzal Husain, 'Presidential Address'

Period	Total	Turani	Irani	Indian Muslim	Rajput	Other
1555	57	27	21	NA	NA	9
1605 (death of Akbar, rank of 500 and above)	95	30	21	5	17	NA
1605-1611 (Jahangir, rank of 1000 and above)	91	30	21	16	19	NA
1620 (Jahangir, rank of 1000 and above)	149	39	36	19	20	35

19. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Courtly Encounters: Translating Courtliness and Violence in Early Modern Eurasia*, Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press, p. 6; chapter 1.

20. Afzal Husain, 'Presidential Address' in Mahendra Pratap, Saiyid Zaheer Husain Jafri eds., *Region in Indian History*, Delhi: Anamika Pub & Distributors, 2008, pp. 101-21.

Table 2 : Racial Composition of Central Ministers under Akbar and Jahangir Calculated from Afzal Husain, 'Presidential Address'

Emperor	Wakil	Diwan	Mir Bakshi	Sadr	Mir Saman
Akbar	5 Irani 2 Turani	8 Irani 1 Turani 1 Other	3 Irani 2 Turani	2 Irani 5 Turani	NA
Jahangir	4 Irani	7 Irani 1 Turani	8 Irani 1 Turani 1 Other	2 Irani 1 Other	4 Irani

The Turani/Irani conflict at court came to a head as early as in 1565/66 when the Iranis were fast catching up[21] and it is likely that thereafter many Turanis moved on to Bengal, one of the farthest and most remote provinces of the Mughal Empire. Throughout the seventeenth century at Delhi, career opportunities for Turanis declined still further, despite the increase in number of *mansabdars*. In contrast, the Turani element became powerful at the Nawabi court at Murshidabad in Bengal from 1717 to 1757.[22]

This fourth phase of Turkish migration also coincided with the expansion in Indian Ocean trade in which the Ottomans participated from the sixteenth century. We find at least three networks here dating from the 1530s: one of resident Turks, the second of itinerant merchants who traded in Bengal long pepper, and a third of sea-faring merchants that either transported from Cochin on the Malabar Coast, or bought in Bengal, the smuggled Portuguese pepper and then sent it onward through land and fluvial routes into China. It is difficult to separate the three and it is very likely that the three were intertwined. (See Fig. 4)

Thomaz notes that a small group of Ottomans were already present in Bengal from 1530, relics of the *rumi* armada against the Portuguese.[23] There may have been other *rumi* armadas we know nothing about. When the expedition of Vasco Pires de Sampaio sailed from Cochin in May 1538 to the aid of the sultan of Bengal, Ghiyas-ud-din Mahmud Shah, who was threatened by the Surid Pathans of Bihar, it encountered some Turks who had come to Bengal, and Cristovao Doria, who commanded one of its nine vessels, imprisoned a Turkish galiot (war ship) there.[24]

---

21. Afzal Husain, 'Presidential Address', p. 110.

22. Briggs, Lt.-Col. John (tr.). The *Siyar-ul-Mutakherin* by Mir Ghulam, London: Oriental Translation Fund. 1832. 4 vols.

23. 'Luis Filipe F.R. Thomaz, 'La Presence Iranienne autour de l'Ocean Indien au XVie siécle d'apres les sources Portugaises de l'epoque', *Archipel*, Volume 68, 2004, pp. 59-158, pp. 116-7.

24. L.F.F.R. Thomaz, *A questao da pimenta em Meados do Seculo XVI: Um Debate Politico do Governo de D. Joao de Castro*, Lisboa: CEPCEP, 1998, p. 103, fn. 392.

The Ottomans in Bengal were not operating in isolation however. We can discern an unofficial Portuguese-Ottoman network from Cochin to Bengal in the 1540s. As early as 1540 the Ottomans had demanded the right to purchase pepper directly from the markets of Calicut. From 1544 a new network appeared in Bengal: the Ottoman pepper network, the Ottoman Turks moving from their unsuccessful foray into the Malabar coast into the Bay of Bengal to buy the smuggled Portuguese pepper at the Bengal ports.[25] It is very likely that earlier 'resident' Ottomans as well as those who stayed behind from the armadas now joined Ottoman merchants in buying the transported smuggled pepper, which entered from the west coast with Portuguese connivance, as also supplying them with Bengal long pepper. The Portuguese viewed with alarm the growing Ottoman spice trade with Bengal.[26] By the start of the seventeenth century Ottoman merchants were well entrenched in Bengal and from there they traded with Southeast Asian ports such as Achin.[27]

25. Pius Malekandathil, *Maritime India, Trade, Religion and Polity in the Indian Ocean,* Delhi: Primus Books, 2010, p. 172. See too for background, A. Reid, 'The Ottomans in Southeast Asia', *Asia Research Institute Working Paper Series* No. 36, 2005, pp. 1-16; Giancarlo Casale, 'The Ottoman "Discovery" of the Indian Ocean in the Sixteenth Century: The Age of Exploration from an Islamic Perspective', in Jerry Bentley, Renate Bridenthal and Karen Wigen, eds., *Seascapes: Maritime Histories, Littoral Cultures and Trans-Oceanic Exchanges,* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007, pp. 87-104; G. Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration,* US: Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. 74, 116; E. Lambourn, 'Khutba and Muslim Networks in the Indian Ocean (Part II)—Timurid and Ottoman Engagements', in Kenneth R. Hall ed., *The Growth of Non-Western Cities: Primary and Secondary Urban Networking, C. 900-1900.* Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2011; F. C. Lane, 'The Mediterranean Spice: Trade Further Evidence of its Revival in the Sixteenth Century', *The American Historical Review,* Vol. 45, No. 3 (Apr. 1940), pp. 581-590.

26. Giancarlo Casale, 'The Ottoman Administration of The Spice Trade in The Sixteenth-Century Red Sea And Persian Gulf', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient,* 49, 2. 2006, pp. 170-98, p. 190.

27. Denys Lombard, 'Martin de Vitre, Premier Breton a Aceh (1601-1603)', *Archipel,* vol. 54. 1997, pp. 3-12, p. 8, cited in Leonard Y. Andaya, 'The Gujarati Legacy in Southeast Asia' in Lotika Varadarajan ed., *Gujarat and the Sea,* Vadodara: Darshak Itihas Nidhi, 2011, pp. 385-404, see p. 390. Also in Leonard Y. Andaya. 'Aceh's Contribution to Standards of Malayness', *Archipel,* Volume 61, 2001, pp. 29-68, p. 39.

Figure 4 : Routes of Turkish Migration to Bengal in the Seventeenth Century

V

While the term 'Ottoman' was never used in the Bengali language, *turki, turani* and sometimes *rumi* being used in its stead, there is, nevertheless, a long history of the Turkish presence in Bengal. Moreover, we find a long list of loan words from the Turkish language that are still used in Bengali.

Analysis of the diffusion of the Turkish loan words strengthens our argument that Turkish influence transcended the port-cities of Bengal—we read that the dialect of Chattagrama for example is heavily influenced by Turkish—and travelled into the interior, thereby becoming an integral part of the Bengali language. The Central Asian Mahmud b. Amir Wali, who travelled in India between 1641 and 1645, met 'in a *khanqah* at the port of Raj Mahal (in Bengal)... an assortment of travellers like himself, who have come from all over from his native Balkh, as well as from Bukhara, Khorasan, 'Iraq (Western Persia), Baghdad, Turkey and Syria.'[28] But the migration of Turanis into Bengal from the Mughal court, and their employment in Mughal and subsequently *nawabi* service in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries made Turkish current in the inland cities as well. The linguistic evidence, therefore, helps us argue for a little known, and long-vanished, but nevertheless significant, Turkish presence in Bengal. (See Table 3)

---

28. Richard Foltz, 'Two Seventeenth-Century Central Asian Travellers to Mughal India', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Third Series, vol. 6, no. 3, November 1996, pp. 367-77. See p. 375. See also Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels in the Age of Discoveries*, 1400-1800, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 142.

Table 3 : Language Networks in Bengal. (Note that this list is not exhaustive.)

Arabic	Persian	Turkish	Chinese	Portuguese
akkel-wisdom	aoaj-sound	kañchi-scissors	cha-tea	anarôsh-pineapple
alada-separate	adalat-court/assembly	chôkmôk-sparkle	chini-sugar	almari-
ashol-real	andaj-guess	thakur-lord/	lichu-lychee	closet/cupboard
elaka-area	aena/arshi-mirror	master	elachi-cardamom	gamla-bucket
ojon-weight	aram-comfort	dada-paternal		girja-church
kôbor-grave	aste-softly	grandfather (in		chabi-key
kamız-shırt	kagoj-paper	Bangladesh)		janala-window
khôbor-news	kharap-bad	dadi-paternal		tamak-tobacco
khali-empty	khub-very	grandmother (in		toale-towel
kheal-	gorom-hot	Bangladesh)		peñpe-papaya
consideration	chôshma-eye glass	nana-maternal		peara-guava
gorıb-poor	chakri-job	grandfather (in		baranda-verandah
jôbab/jôoab-	chador-blanket	Bangladesh)		balti-pail
answer	jan-dear	nani-maternal		bashon-utensil
jôma-collect	jaega-place	grandmother (in		botol-bottle
jinısh-object	degchi-pot	Bangladesh)		botam-button
tarikh-date	dôm-breath	baba-father		boma-bomb
dunia-world	deri-late	damat (damad)-		mistri-
nôkol-fake	dokan-store	bridegroom		mechanic/artisan
fokir-poor person	bôd-bad	evlad (aulad)-		jishu-Jesus
boi-book	bagan-garden	children		pauruti-pau/bread
bôdol-exchange	bachcha-child	baburchi-		shaban-sapon/
baki-remaining	môja-fun	cook/chef		soap
môshola-spice	rasta-road	begom-lady		
shaheb-sir	sahukhin-	lash-corpse		
hishab-calculation	shaukin	dukan-shop		
hokum-order,	roj-everyday	halva-halua		
ruling, verdict	shôsta- inexpensive	kanun-law		
	hindu-Hindu	mahal-mahalla		
	tadbir-arranging,	mukhtar-		
	disposing,managing,	vilayet		
	administering,	namus-namaskar		
	regulating			

What does this list of loan words from different languages tell us about Turkish penetration into Bengal? It is clear that Arabic and Persian had the most influence, with loan words describing activities, relations and objects from almost every sphere of life, while the Turkish was limited to descriptive words, some offices or functions such as *bawarchi*, and familial associations such as those describing grandparents. The influence of Portuguese is evident, indicative of the new commodities and objects they introduced to Bengal. Surprisingly, the Chinese influence, although China had a very long engagement with Bengal, is limited to a very few words.

<h1 style="text-align:center">VI</h1>

In conclusion, we may say that the pre-Ottoman Turks were certainly active in Bengal. But we also must recognize that it is difficult to trace their ethnicity from their geographical origins since the term Ottoman Empire is not used, while the term Rum is used more in the sense of title rather than a geographical entity. The difficulty is compounded by the fact that the vague term Turkistan could also mean eastern Persia and northern and western Afghanistan.

It is equally difficult to trace ethnicity from the names or even titles, Turks being referred to as *turuska*, *turki* and *turani*. Some Seljuk Turks made their way to the Delhi Sultanate, being sometime called 'Turkmen' or 'Turcoman', but the term 'Turkmen', referring to Turkish nomads of the steppe, was usually used in place of Seljuk or Ghuzz. But 'Turkmen' was also used by Muslim historians in the sense of designating those Turkish nomads who had converted to Islam. Abu Osman Minhaj us Siraj Juzjani, author of the *Tabaqat i Nasiri* (1260) also used the term 'Turk' in the sense of unfree (*ghulam*) and sometimes as ethnic category ('khaqan' or 'cap' of the 'Turks'), or even applied it to the non-Turkish Qara-Khitan and Mongols.[29] So we see that their identity is hard to establish since the use of the term 'Turk' is imprecise.

The term *rumi* occurs much later, in the sixteenth century, and referred more precisely to the Ottomans, but we find it used more as part of a proper name than as a title or designative category.

How did the Turks come into India? We see that initially it was through the overland route, but as sea trade across the Indian Ocean expanded they came in by the sea route as well.

<h1 style="text-align:center">VII</h1>

Since the pre-Ottoman Turks in India originated from the vast region of Central Asia and even some parts of Persia, we may say that their origins and identity—geographic, ethnic and political—remain unclear. So, we have had to take recourse to other means to trace the pre-Ottoman Turkish engagement with Bengal, viz. commercial networks and linguistic traces, in this paper. The induction of Turkish words into the Bengali language is testimony to the long Turkish engagement with Bengal. It is time we study this, for the influence of Arabic, Persian and Portuguese have so far dominated studies of interactions in pre-colonial Bengal.

---

29. Peter Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, Appendix 1, p. 326.

Horizontal Linkage of States through Matrimony in the Medieval Deccan

SALMA AHMED FAROOQUI

There is a general tendency among historians to look at the history of a particular region from its broadest definition and then move on to discussing the specificities associated with the different characteristics of the region under consideration. In doing so, the factors that have shaped the region are brought to light which then helps to formulate an understanding of the state and society as was prevalent in the said region. Keeping in line with this tradition, this paper studies the inter-state matrimonial linkages in the medieval Deccan as a specific method of strengthening ties.

The Deccan emerged as a historical entity with the evolution of political power that did not emanate in North India but was an amalgamation of different streams from Persia, Turkistan, Arabia, North India and the region itself. From the fourteenth to the twentieth centuries stretching physically to cover Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and a part of Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh, the states of today's India, the Deccan largely incorporated foreign elements as well as retained its native traditions thereby giving birth to systems which nurtured an outlook far ahead of their time. As a result, the region gained a distinctive identity in terms of the establishment of a unique culture—*Dakhni* culture—that impacted music, literature, art and architecture with the prime purpose of caring for the people and their aspirations. One can find, centuries ago, the medieval Deccan was host to societies representing multiple cultures spread across time and space that retained their individual identities owing to the policies of the sultanates and kingdoms of those times. Incorporation of Persian models of statecraft, theories of kingship, character of administrative institutions, ideals of government, new traits in art, architecture, literature and religion, support for the local languages, active promotion of vernacular literature[1] and encouragement of traditional arts and crafts made the region a coherent cultural reality.

Looking at the diverse trends and fresh thematic orientations in recent times, matrimonial alliances between states can be viewed as a significant criterion in shaping the state-structure. One of the most distinguishing features of the *Dakhni* state-society was matrimonial alliances between peoples of different racial, ethnic, religious and social backgrounds, the other being acceptance of foreigners with their varied civilization-oriented traits into the region. Hypothetically speaking, inter-religious marriages between states were more of a political strategy deployed to either neutralize threats from rival neighbours or establish contact with other influential states. The examples of such matrimonial ties range

---

1. H.K. Sherwani, *The Bahmanis of the Deccan*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publications, New Delhi, 1985, pp. 287-95 has given elaborate details about the linguistic development in the Deccan.

starting with the period of the Bahmanis up to the Asaf Jahis. Marriages of such nature made the medieval Deccan a meeting-ground of multiple cultures from where new cultures were born and every ethnic and racial element in the population not only survived but progressed with its distinctiveness. It also had an ideological impact on the region. These factors gave the Deccan a higher place than many of its contemporary counterparts in the Indian subcontinent.

I would like to initiate my argument by stating a paradox: 'although it is true that matrimonial alliances produce families, it is also true that families construct marriage alliances as a means of establishing an association with one another. Such ever-enlarging alliances have always been the requirement of civilization. It is natural to get married and raise a family. These expectations seem so normal, simple, and well-justified, that it may be hard to believe that people of other times and other cultures might have felt differently. However, as we learn from historians and anthropologists, our own present forms of marriage and family are relatively new and by no means universal.

The French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss[2] gives an interesting example from the native society of New Guinea by stating that 'the purpose of getting married is not so much to obtain a wife, but to secure brothers-in-law.' Accordingly, Levi-Strauss describes husbands and wives as pawns in a larger social game played by their two respective families who use the institution of marriage for the mutual acquisition of 'in-laws'. Or, in some non-western societies, marriages may be formalized between partners unrelated to the natural factors of happiness, love, sexual intercourse, or procreation; it may not lead to establishing a new household, and it may, from the very beginning, be planned only as a short-term or strategic arrangement.

On the same lines of Levi-Strauss, the Dutch social anthropologist, F.A.E. Van Wouden in his thesis *Types of Social Structure in Eastern Indonesia* (translated into English by Rodney Needham)[3] took the stand that the marriage alliances were the pivot for social organization. By talking of several models within the affinal alliances, Wouden and scholars followed him but debated about forms of alliances which were structural mirror images of affinal alliances but were not affinal. In such alliances, the ties between the partners exist without any formalization of marriage rites. These alliances are just as important in the integration of culture and social structure as Wouden claimed marriage is. Both, Wouden and

2. Dieter Bartels, *Alliances Without Marriage: Exogamy, Economic Exchange and Symbolic Unity among Ambonese Christians and Muslims*, Cornell University, p. 1; For more information see Lṛvi-Strauss, Claude, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, Beacon Pub, Boston, 1969.

3. F.A.E. Van Wouden, *Sociale Structuurtypen in de Groote Oost*, Leiden, J. Ginsberg, 1935. Although Wouden wrote about this theory earlier than Lṛvi Strauss, his work mentioned above was translated into English by Rodney Needham with the title *Types of social structure in eastern Indonesia* only much later.

Levi-Strauss, thus see the exchange of women, within and outside the institution of marriage as being crucial in the horizontal integration of social groups of a particular region.[4]

Therefore, the hypothesis being advanced in this paper claims that the horizontal linkage of states through matrimony was a strategic method to either eliminate coercion or establish contact with influential states. In this context, a retrospective of the available records on the medieval Deccan reveals the ways in which the neighbouring warring states of the region sometimes tried to penetrate one another by evolving distinct techniques to strengthen their respective state structures. One of these methods was arranging matrimonial alliances with each other. In some other circumstances, marriages were used to establish connections with powerful states through which there could be a rise in the political and social position of the state. The Bahmanis of Gulbarga and Bidar, the Qutb Shahis of Golconda, the Adil Shahis of Bijapur, the Marathas in western India and the Mughals in North India, under unusual circumstances, tried to penetrate other states in order to transform the opponent to an ally. Later, it was the *Asaf Jahis* of Hyderabad who went a step further by creating transnational alliances for global outreach. There was no one principle that can properly account for all such cases, and no single formula for understanding these inter-state relations-whether it was Firuz Shah Bahmani's marriage to Devaraya I's daughter or Yusuf Adil Shah's marriage to a Maratha lady, or the taking of a Hindu wife, Bhagirathi, by Ibrahim Qutb Shah or Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah's legendary romance with Bhagmati or the seventh Nizam, Mir Osman Ali Khan's sons' marriages to Turkish princesses—all stand as unique examples of explaining state structure.

Firuz Shah Bahmani (1397-1422), the greatest ruler of the Bahmanis, is generally compared to Akbar for he was known to have given a number of high offices to the Hindus, many among who were brahmins. This was perhaps done in an effort to balance the high number of influential foreigners (Persians and Iraqis known as the *Afaqis*)[5] as well as to strengthen his own position as a ruler who was claiming to be all powerful. As part of this exercise, Firuz Shah took pains to maintain good relations with his Hindu neighbours, and is said to have married several Hindu women from divergent ethnic backgrounds. Each of these women was accompanied into his realm with a set of maid servants belonging to her nationality. It is said that the sultan freely conversed with the women in his harem in their own mother tongues.[6] It is possible that he was also influenced by the necessity of contracting marriages of convenience (like making official appointments of Hindus) to

---

4. Bartels, p. 1.

5. The *Tarikh-i-Muhammad Qutb Shah*, completed in July 1617, p. 231; Naqvi, Sadiq, Cultural Synthesis in the Qutb Shahi Kingdom, *APHC*, Kurnool, 1985, p. 68; Rizvi, S.A.A., *The Wonder that was India*, Vol. II, Rupa & Co, New Delhi, 1999, p. 77 gives information about the social position enjoyed by the *Afaqis*.

6. Sherwani, p. 100.

maintain equilibrium between competing elements of the population.[7] He tried to gain legitimacy for concluding these temporary alliances by following the advice of his preceptor, Mir Fazlullah Inju who being a *Shia* recommended to the sultan that temporary marriages called *mutah* are a legitimate form of alliance in *Shia* doctrine. Hence, while remaining a *Sunni* in all other aspects of life and prayers, Firuz adopted the system of *mutah* where his nuptials were concerned. This idea suited the sultan who found it an easy way of entering into several marriage contracts of temporary nature and it not weighing heavy on his conscience.[8] It would perhaps be an exaggeration to quote from *Ferishta* who says that it was mainly for creating social ties that he married Hindu women from North and South particularly from Maharashtra, Tilangana and Karnataka.[9] It is also related that the sultan was considerate enough to read through the Old and New Testaments[10] perhaps to be in sync with the Jewish and Christian inmates of his harem. This information purports that he had also married non-Muslim women of Hindu, Jew and Christian denominations.

Firuz Shah's marriage to the daughter of Devaraya I, the king of Vijayanagar, is a well-documented fact. This particular matrimonial alliance conducted in 1407-08, was a related move when the sultan himself had laid siege to the Vijayanagar city of Hampi, and became the honoured guest of the Raya for three days amidst much feasting and exchanging of gifts. As part of the imposition of tribute, one of Devaraya I's daughters was to be given in marriage to him. In addition to the bride he also received Bankapur and other districts as dowry from Vijayanagar.[11] What was exceptional about this alliance was the manner in which he celebrated this marriage—rather than demand delivery of a bride to his court at Gulbarga, he indulged in a leisurely wedding celebration at Hampi where the Vijayanagar-king presided over the ceremonies. For forty days a great processional market stretched along the road between Vijayanagar and Firuz's camp, some twenty-one miles outside the city. The bride, having been brought to the sultan's camp, proceeded with the sultan to the city gate where the royal couple was greeted by Devaraya I. From there, the two kings rode in great pomp to the royal palace, along a six-mile-road lined with velvet and satin fabrics, and strewn with flowers.[12] This marriage led to direct influence of Hindu culture

7. Muhammad Kasim Ferishta, *Tarikh-i-Ferishta* tr. into eng. by John Briggs, *History of the Rise of Muhammaden Power in India*, Vol. I, reprint New Delhi, 1981, p. 309.

8. Ferishta, I. p. 306. There is a passage in Rafiuddin Shirazi's *Tadhkiratul Mulk*, folio 9 (b), MSS Asafiyah 1081 AH where it is mentioned that Firuz Shah had only one wife.

9. A.M. Siddiqui, Firuz Shah Bahmani, *Indian History Congress Proceedings*, Allahabad, 1938, p. 290.

10. Ferishta, I. p. 307.

11. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India from pre-historic times to the fall of Vijayanagar*, OUP, New Delhi, 1975, 268; Robert Sewell, *A Forgotten Empire: Vijayanagar*, Kessinger Publishing, 2004, pp. 44-5.

12. Richard Eaton, *A Social History of the Deccan*, Cambridge, 2008, p. 50.

at the Bahmani court and helped Firuz in edifying the cultural milieu in his kingdom which was his main aim.[13]

Interestingly, inter-religious marriages for political purposes were being carried out in the Deccan long before the Mughal emperor, Akbar, started this practice in the sixteenth century. Even though the Bahmani-Vijayanagar matrimonial alliance was imposed after a defeat, it led to the establishment of an apparently amicable relationship between the two rulers for a few years.

The cross-cultural influences that were underway from the time of the Bahmanis started to take on a more concrete shape in the time of its successor states. A new Indo-Muslim synthesis was emerging in the Deccan, which became more pronounced with peninsular India's commercial and cultural interaction with the Persian Plateau in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Persian culture was affecting the entire orbit of the Deccan in many ways. Other than inspiring and championing new traits in art, architecture, literature and religion at the Deccani courts, the region was ideologically transforming areas that were hitherto considered traditional domains.

Yusuf Adil Shah (1489-1510), the founder of the Adil Shahi kingdom of Bijapur, was a man of Turkish descent being the son of king Agha Murad of Turkey.[14] After being saved by his mother in a family battle for succession, Yusuf came to the Deccan and joined the office of Mahmud Gawan in the court of the Bahmani Sultanate at Bidar. His bravery and personality raised him rapidly in the sultan's favour, resulting in his appointment as the governor of Bijapur. He declared independence in 1489 to establish the Adil Shahi sultanate. Being cultured and an ardent follower of *Shia* faith, his tolerance towards other religions was evident. Other than constructing several beautiful buildings, inviting poets and artisans from Persia, Turkey and Rome to his court, he displayed great faith in Sufi saints like Chanda Hussaini. The highlight of his career was his marriage to Punji, the sister of a Maratha warrior, Mukhandrao. Ismail Adil Shah, the successor of Yusuf, was born to her. Later renamed as Bubuji Khanum, Punji's marriage to Yusuf Adil Shah other than displaying the secular credentials that the Deccan was becoming famous for, demonstrates aptly what P.M. Joshi describes: 'The Marathas were to the Adil Shahis what the Rajputs were to the Mughal Empire.'[15] After Yusuf's death, Bubuji Khanum along with Dilshad Agha (Yusuf's foster sister) tried to save her son's position from being usurped.[16] This was natural as she wanted her son to succeed to the throne.

---

13. Sherwani, p. 101.

14. Iftikhar Hussain Ghauri, Muslims in the Deccan in the Middle Ages: A Historical Survey, *Islamic Culture* XLIX(3): 153, Hyderabad, 1975.

15. P. M. Joshi, Position of the Hindus in the Adil Shahi Kingdom of Bijapur, *Deccan History Congress*, Hyderabad, 1945, p. 309.

16. Abdul Ghani Imaratwale, *History of the Bijapur Subah*, New Delhi, 2007, p. 60

There are many points of comparison between the Maratha-Adil Shahi relations and the Rajput-Mughal relations. Although, the Marathas were not the ruling power as the Rajputs, they lived as scattered units under a number of chieftains. The Adil Shahis helped the Marathas develop as a military power which later helped Shivaji in consolidating himself through his able leadership. Even after the fall of Bijapur the Marathas resisted the Mughals from conquering the Deccan. Just as Akbar while wanting to maintain his status as a Muslim ruler wanted to secure the active support of the powerful Rajputs whose friendship and cooperation would be useful to rule over his empire with greater strength, in the same way the Adil Shahis looked towards the Marathas for support.[17]

The matrimonial alliances between the Adil Shahis and the Marathas did not end with Yusuf Adil Shah and Bubuji Khanum. After the fall of Bijapur, Muhammad Muhiuddin's (the son of Sikandar Adil Shah, the last Adil Shahi sultan) marriage was arranged by Aurangzeb with the daughter of Sambhaji. The bride requested that she be given a sum of 7,000 rupees as dowry which was fulfilled by Aurangzeb.[18] Thus, affinal relations continued to take place between the Marathas and the Adil Shahis.

In the neighbouring kingdom of Golconda, we see the presence of a Hindu wife, Bhagirathi, from the Vijayanagar kingdom in Ibrahim Qutb Shah's (1550-80) harem and Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah's (1580-1612) legendary amorous liaison with Bhagmati who it is said later became his wife. Ibrahim Qutb Shah's marriage to Bhagirathi was performed when Ibrahim was a refugee at Hampi in the kingdom of Vijayanagar. Bhagirathi was an elegant and sophisticated Hindu lady from Vijayanagar who bore sultan Ibrahim four sons, one of whom was Muhammad Quli. Golconda was named Bhagirathipatnam after Bhagirathi. This marriage concretized the relationship for the Qutb Shahis with a powerful

---

17. The Rajputs were not dependent on Mughal privileges. Therefore, other than giving them official appointments in senior revenue and military posts, Akbar entered into matrimonial alliances with Rajput princesses: with the daughter of Raja Bharmal of Amber in 1562 and with the princesses of Bikaner and Jaisalmer in 1570. The Rajput wives of the emperor wielded considerable influence on him and recognized the need for their children to be brought up as Muslims because of political and social exigencies of the time. On the surface it appears that Akbar's marriages with the Rajputs were a result of his broadmindedness and ability to rise above the religious barriers but gaining the support and loyalty of a formidable clan was an important factor that made such harmonious inter-religious ties possible. Such marriages also continued during the reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jahan. A friendly Rajputana was indispensable for the creation and consolidation of an all-India Mughal Empire, because the major routes to Gujarat, Malwa, Sind and the Deccan passed through this region and any Rajput hostility would hamper the Mughals from conquering and controlling other regions. They therefore initiated a policy to integrate the Rajput *ranas* or chieftains and their territories in such a way that while accepting Mughal suzerainty the *ranas* retained their individuality in their territories which became autonomous states within the Mughal Empire.

18. *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, p. 287 quoted at Imaratwale, p. 253.

opponent state that was a major threat to the sultanate. One must remember that this period was an era of shifting military alliances between the Deccani sultanates and Vijayanagar. Other than edifying the cultural ethos of the state, the marriage neutralized Vijayanagar vis-à-vis the Qutb Shahi state. Then came out Muhammad Quli's much spoken about alliance with Bhagmati which still remains inconclusive today as its historical credibility is yet to be established. Defying all traditions, he is supposed to have married Bhagmati, and made her his queen. He rechristened her Hyder Mahal, and named the city of Hyderabad in her honour. Even if we are to believe this, this particular marriage other than serving as an example to demonstrate the Hindu-Muslim unity practised by the sultans, cannot be considered as a marriage performed for gaining political mileage as has been seen in the other marriages. Similarly, Abdullah Qutb Shah kept company with the Hindu courtesans-Taramati, Pemamati and Balamati.[19] Once again there was no political motive attached to these liaisons. Hence we will not take these alliances within the purview of our discussion.

There are still more examples of interesting marriages performed in the Deccan this time between members of the same community. One such event was the marriages of the sons' of Mir Osman Ali Khan (1911-48), the seventh Nizam with the Turkish princesses. The Nizam's elder son Nawab Mir Himayat Ali Khan Azam Jah Bahadur was married to Princess Durrushehvar, the daughter of Abdul Mejid Khan II, the last Caliph and ex-Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, and his younger son Nawab Mir Shujat Ali Khan Moazzam Jah Bahadur was married to her cousin, Princess Niloufer. These marriages were significant for they were perceived as an alliance between two illustrious dynasties—the Osmania and the Asafia. A joint wedding of both couples took place on 12 November 1931 at Nice, in southern France. The wedding ceremony was a fairly simple affair attended only by the members of the ex-sultan's family, some Turkish nobles and a few personal friends. The caliph himself performed the wedding and the marriage register was signed by three witnesses representing the Hyderabad State. After the couples reached Hyderabad among the many receptions arranged to celebrate these royal weddings, the state banquet was held at the Chowmohalla palace on 4 January 1932. This banquet assumes significance because of the speech given by Lt. Col. T.H. Keyes, the British Resident, who was the chief guest of the evening. The crux of his speech lay in him reminding the people of the words of the Nizam two years ago in which the latter had said that his dominions should play an important role in evolving a system which would bring peace and prosperity to India. This almost implied that the Indian princely states abandon their isolation and become part of the British Commonwealth. The Nizam was ready to enter into an All-India Federation provided the sovereignty of his State was safeguarded. In other words, the British Empire was to see that the title of the Faithful Ally of the British Government was no empty formula. Then the news had come that the Nizam was arranging the marriages of his sons' with the Turkish princesses. Both the ideas sprung from the Nizam's deep-rooted

---

19. Chandraiah, *Hyderabad-400 Glorious Years*, Chandraiah Memorial Trust, Hyderabad, 1998, p. 207.

desire to do his best for all that concerned him, his family and the people of his dominions and for India as a whole. The step taken by the Nizam to arrange these matrimonial alliances exalted his position as a ruler who acted with foresight and courage for his family and his people.[20]

These developments should be seen in the background of the Turkish National Assembly voting to abolish the Caliphate in 1924. Exiled, the caliph had found himself in a difficult position. Seeing the caliph in such a condition, the Nizam was advised that a matrimonial alliance with the exiled caliph's family would gain for the Hyderabad State wide-ranging geo-political benefits by establishing the Nizam in a position to command the allegiance of millions of Muslims. There were many rounds of negotiations and finally in 1931, the marriages materialized. Thus the Nizam formally established connection with the Ottoman Empire which would, he hoped, elevate his position in the Muslim world.[21] Interestingly, other eligible royal princes had also asked for the hands of these exquisite princesses, including King Faud of Egypt, King Faisal of Iraq and the Shah of Persia. This establishes the importance of the Osmania dynasty with which leading Muslim powers of the world wanted to get associated but it was the *Asaf Jahis* who triumphed.

Apart from political significance, these marriages were instrumental in bringing about a change in Hyderabad's society by impressing upon the people western ideas of freedom and liberty that were symbolized in the demeanor of the Turkish princesses. They broke the barrier of the *purdah* and freely mingled with the nobility and common people at gatherings. Both the princesses also worked for the emancipation of women by speaking against the *burkha* and collected funds to start hospitals for women and children.[22]

Thus these examples of matrimonial alliances that have been cited were path-breaking events in the Deccan's history. All of these marriages in some way or the other leveraged political gains for the parties involved. In the case of the Vijayanagar-Bahmani contest, the marriage of Firuz Shah Bahmani to Devaraya I's daughter ensured an amicable relationship between the two warring states for a while. For maintaining equilibrium between competing elements in society Firuz Shah found temporary matrimonial alliances with other women a way of linking states. Applying the principles of Lévi-Strauss and Van Wouden here, one can draw the assumption that *mutah* for him became a convenient way of convincing himself

---

20. Krishnaswamy Mudiraj, *Pictorial Hyderabad*, Vol. II, Chandrakanth Press, Hyderabad, 1934, pp. 21-4.

21. Hastings Fraser, *Our Faithful Ally the Nizam*, Smith, Elder and Co., London, 1865, pp. 250-77. The fact that *Sijdah* (prostration) was done before the Nizams shows that they were very particular about their position and glory.

22. Princess Niloufer took leadership in organizing a society to collect funds for construction of a hospital for women and children named after her and also became its head. Princess Durrushehvar apart from her social activities was responsible for opening the Princess Esra Hospital.

that it was legitimate to enter into short-term marriage arrangements. Since the foundation of the Adil Shahi sultanate by Yusuf Adil Shah, the Marathas had always stood by the succeeding sultans of Bijapur. His matrimonial alliance with the Marathas was a step forward in making the Maratha people willingly cooperate with the Adil Shahis as their loyal support was vital for the existence of the sultanate. It will not be wrong to say that from the late seventeenth century, the state of Bijapur had almost become a homeland for the Marathas. The marriage of Ibrahim Qutb Shah to Bhagirathi helped the Qutb Sahis to develop close relationships with a powerful opponent state of Vijayanagar which was perceived as a potent threat to the sultanate's existence. The period was an era of shifting military alliances between large and small states in the Deccan. Other than edifying the cultural ethos of the state, the marriage neutralized Vijayanagar vis-à-vis the Qutb Shahis. It also led to giving the Deccan in general and the Qutb Shahis in particular, a distinct identity in the form of the *Dakhni* culture.[23] The Turkish connection of the marriages of his two sons built a hope for Mir Osman Ali Khan that he could perhaps become the predominant Muslim leader not only in India but of the Islamic world at large.

The use of a historical approach in the marriage alliance theory makes it possible to go beyond to include an understanding of changing scope, form and meaning. These examples of matrimonial alliances performed in the medieval Deccan were like important pacts between two states. The partner states were usually located as neighbouring states or were sometimes far apart. Frequently, they also adhered to different religions. Whether it was economic motives or territorial gains, the states cooperated much more closely and interacted much more smoothly when related through marriage ties. Through marriages, not only the connections between the states strengthened but also it was a strategy to transform the opponent to an ally. Furthermore, such alliances led to a series of mini-alliances which would augment the overall bond between the states as well as raise the status of states.

---

23. Shahbaz Safrani, *Golconda and Haidarabad*, Marg Pub, Bombay, 1994, p. 14. For general information on Islamic culture see Nizami, K.A., *State and Culture in Medieval India*, Delhi, 1985, p. 70; Rizvi, S.A.A., *The Wonder that was India (1200-1700)*, Vol. 2, Sidgwick and Jackson, GB, 1987, pp. 277-316.

Pre-Mughal India: Two Illustrated Manuscripts and Their Social Importance

SWATI BISWAS

Distortion of history, and particularly history of the Indian subcontinent, is not new. The British started it long before India's independence. They had their own agenda. In the year 1947 the subcontinent got divided into two nations and since then the right-wing historians kept on distorting the medieval history of India in the name of religion which became the burning issue of politics in the subcontinent.

On the other hand the liberal historians tried to combat the above trend in 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s by scientific investigation of history. As a result of which the conservative historians were forced to relegate to the back. 1992 changed the course of history again when the demolition of Babri Masjid shook the very ethos of secular India. The reactionary historians again came to the forefront and thus historical investigations based on source were taken over by myth. The right-wing politics of the time encouraged the whole process and funded the whole project.

The task of liberal historians became all the more difficult. The trend in recent time has been to mark medieval history especially Sultanate history of Delhi as a dark period when the progress of the land was somewhat stalled due to repression and loot by the Muslim rulers. This repression as though was against the Hindus who were the homogeneous population of Hindustan, the land of the Hindus. The regional and cultural difference of the land is completely ignored and the task of the Delhi Sultanate was only conversion of the Hindu population.[1]

In the hands of these historians the Mughals were only foreigners and invaders who took over all the rights of the Hindus.

This is the important reason for investigating the regional identity of the land which took its shape during this period so that the cultural syncretism of the subcontinent be grasped better. And the best way is to investigate the contemporary sources objectively through an analytical approach.

This paper thus tries to look into the social history of the pre-Mughal North India through two illustrated manuscripts: Chandayana and Mrigavat.

The time between the Sultanate rule and Mughal rule was a period when regional identity was making its new inroads in the hands of the different smaller regional rulers posing after Delhi Sultanate. The urge to curve a niche for their own political identity was so strong that they intentionally encouraged the regional cultural pursuits through different

---

1. Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subramanyam (eds), *The Languages of Political Islam, India 1200-1800*, University of Chicago Press, 2004.

art forms. On the other hand there were certain folk lores and art forms which got encompassed into geographical boundaries independent of the different political zones.[2]

Before going into the details of the two manuscripts it is important to make a sketch of the history of development of illustrated texts during this time. The above two manuscripts have many editions and was illustrated throughout medieval times which is adequately prove its popularity. The texts give a vivid detail not only about the society at large but also the gender relations that is grossly misunderstood during the time.

The North Indian political scenario at large was distributed among Gujarat Sultanate, the Bengal Sultanate, Jaunpur Sultanate, and Mandu Sultanate. Added to these four large chunks were the smaller Rajput political areas. The Delhi Sultanate itself was reduced to a regional block. These political areas in turn were instrumental in building the regional cultural zones which later was engulfed within the Mughal rule to give it a even larger Indian identity.

The time of illustrated painting reached its all-time pre-Mughal popularity during this time. It was the time when the western Indian painting genre reached its pinnacle. This school was otherwise called the Jain School. From the name it is comprehensible that the school started its journey in the Jain bhandaras of Gujarat and then became much popular in North and Central India.

The popularity of this genre leads to the fact that even secular texts were illustrated in it. Hindu texts including Vaishnava text and Buddhists texts were also illustrated in this form. The professional artist mastered the art form throughout the region. It is important to note that these skilled artists later joined the bandwagon of artists in the Mughal atelier.[3]

The interesting part is that even a *Shahnamah* which otherwise is central to the cultural ethos of Persia was illustrated in western Indian form.[4] The content and mood of the text is essentially foreign. The reason for this development is tenable because by then *Shahnamah* was much popular in India and some Muslim patrons insisted for the illustration of this text. The Hindu artist catered to the patron as per his wish but executed the work in his own skill.[5]

Apart from this there were two other forms which gained popularity—the folk form and the Sultanate form. These two are blanket terms within which different folk-styled illustrations and styles inspired by Persia were included. The reason for the popularity of

2. Catherine B. Asher and Cynthia Talibiot, *India before Europe,* Cambridge University Press, New Delhi, 2006.

3. Jeremiah P. Losty, *The Art of the Book in India,* The British Library, London, 1982.

4. B.N. Goswamy, *A Jainesque Sultanate Shahnama and the Context of pre-Mughal Panting,* Museum Rielberg Zurich, 1988.

5. B.N. Goswamy, 'The Master of the Jainesque Sultanate Shahnama', *Masters of Indian Painting, 1100-1650,* ed. by Milo C. Beach, Eberhard Fischer, B.N. Goswamy, Project Director-Jorrit Britschgi, Artibur Asiae Publishers, 2011.

different art form had its own reason. Trade with the West and Central Asia brought India within the ambit of Pan-Islamic World. The market of Hindustan became more vibrant when illustrated Persian text and picturesque Persian carpet were easily available. The motifs were readily accepted within the manifold of indigenous form.[6] The artists enthusiastically started using the motifs, new colour schemes, and techniques. Expensive colours were readily available and merchant patrons sponsored the use of these colours. The clichéd form started taking a new turn though iconographic change was not noticed much.

II

It is in this milieu that the Chandayana and Mrigavat which will be discussed were illustrated.

Chandayana falls under the ambit of Indo-Sufi *masnavi* or Hindi-Sufi love lore. The origin of these love lore was in Persia and Turkey. It flourished for a long time between the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries in the subcontinent.

Masnavi is a long poetry within which the philosophy of Sufism in its larger context is interwoven. Thus there is an allegoric interpretation of the storyline. Usually in the subcontinent it appeared in the form of romantic tales and the end was brought about in the death or rejection of the material world and this in turn symbolized moksha.[7]

Masnavi was never a part of bhakti literature.[8] The context and content were very different. Thus the attempt of clubbing *masnavi* within bhakti literature is a naive attempt. In North India *masnavi* was written in Avadhi dialect. The history of romantic Hindi literature thus was started with *masnavi*. Chandayana was written probably between AD 1377 and 1380 by Maulana Daud a resident of Dalmau which is very close to today's Rai Barailley. The earlier texts are all in Perso-Arabic script. The complete text though is unfortunately not found yet.

Maulana Daud was the disciple of Shaikh Zainuddin who was in turn the disciple of Sufi saint Nasiruddin of Delhi. The work of Maulana Daud was in honour of Jauna Shah who was a subordinate of Sultan Firuz Tughluq.

The Sufi saint set the story in the backdrop of the North Indian city named Govar which was under the rule of Mahar Sahdev. The daughter Chanda gets married at the age of fifteen and at the age of sixteen she was awe-struck at the look of her husband and his incapacity to be the rightful husband. She narrates her sorrow to her sister in law. The gender solidarity of the women is stressed by the fact that it was her sister-in-law who advised her to return back to her parents. The poet throughout was sympathetic towards

---

6. Irma L. Fraad and Richard Ettinghausen, 'Sultanate Painting in Persian Style, Primarily from the First half of the Fifteenth Century: A Priliminary Study', in *CHHAVI, Golden Jubilee Volume*, Banaras, 1971.

7. Naseem A. Hines, *Maulana Daud's Chndayan-A Critical Study*, Manohar, 2009.

8. Parameshwarilal Gupta (ed.), *Chndayan*, Bombay: Hindi Granth Ratnakar, 1964.

Chanda. The women perhaps had the right to deject their husbands for rightful cause and it was not unusual for at least upper-class women.

In the meantime after her return Govar was attacked by Rupchand who was much attracted towards Chanda for her beauty and proposed to marry her. Govar was at this juncture saved by Lorik who was married to Maina. Chanda after a glance fell in love with Lorik and informed him through a maid named Brihaspati. Thus the proposal went to Lorik from the princess herself. Unlike the usual sketch of medieval women that we have in the later period the reality was perhaps much different.

Lorik and Chanda fell in love with each other and ran away. The story takes a new turn at this juncture. Both the lovers faced tremendous hardship and then they separated. Maina and her mother-in-law tries different trick to bring back the lovers. The best part of the narration of that the women explicitly talks about their emotions and the poet not only gives them a humane ear but becomes their spokesperson.

The poet and readers give their moral support to these married lovers ignoring the social norm that faces immense difficulties. The snake bites Chanda which becomes the allegoric symbol of Sufi moksha.[9] The medieval time is portrayed by some social historians as anti-women as Islam found inroads in the subcontinent. The interesting part is the Muslim poet not only pen pictures a romance with Hindu characters but was gender-sensitive enough to see the world from the point of the protagonists. The poet apart from the royal life was able to give an idea of the day-to-day affair of the common man and tribal people. The life of Hindu saints also covers a major part of this love lore.

The love lore became so popular that it was illustrated in different style and was written over a considerable time. The Muslim and Hindus must have had a congenial relation or else this lovelore could not have been written by a Muslim poet. The text is again very important for the discipline of women studies as it portrays the gender relations of the society with much finesse.

One such illustrated Chandayana in Avadhi dialect but in Perso-Arabic script is shared between the museums of Chandigarh of India and Lahore and Karachi of Pakistan. There are three other Chandayana in the Sultanate style.

The Lahore Chandigarh Chandayana is styled in vertical codex form and perhaps written between AD 1525 and 1550. The illustrations skillfully adjust with the text to depict the life of common man at its best. The Chaurapanchasika style is best utilized for its layout. The illustrations have names of certain months written in Devanagri script. The illustration on one hand could encompass the Sufi ethos of common man's devotion to the almighty and also the erotic desire of the romance. The illustrations portray the poet at one corner writing his script on the real. Distinctly the words *Allah ho Akbar* is visible. The test thus becomes the true pictorial representation of the social history of the time.

---

9. Ibid.

III

The second text in discussion is Shaikh Qutban's Mrigavat. The illustrated copy of this manuscript is preserved at the Bharat Kala Bhavan of Benaras Hindu University. It is text of two hundred and fifty three illustrations of which three has been lost. The story of Mrigavat was unearthed from a script found in the Khanqah of Delhi. The script was introduced by historian S.H. Askari and Z.A. Desai. The script is in Nastaliq and has four hundred and thirty verses. Each verse has a four rhyming alternate sentences and two short verses.

The poet like any other Sunni Muslim starts by mentioning the Prophet followed by four Caliphs. He then mentions of Makhdum Shaikh Badhan, a Suharwardi Sufi saint. Shaikh Qutban was perhaps his disciple. Shaikh Badhan was in turn the disciple of the famous Sufi saint Muhammad Isa Taj Jaunpuri. The next four verses were dedicated to Sultan Hussain Shah Sharqi, the former Sultan of Jaunpur. The ruler by then had lost major portion of Bihar and Tirhut to Sikandar Lodi.

The poet hopes that the former ruler will get back his throne which he terms as *singhasan* and *chatra* as it was termed locally. He compares the ruler with the Hindu mythological king Judhisthir of the Mahabharata. The comparison and the terminology remind us the syncretic culture of the two communities during Pre-Mughal time. The poet also praises Mulla Daud and thus the text was written after Chandayana.

The story starts with the tale of a Hindu religious ruler who does not have an heir. The devotion and goodness of the ruler led to the birth of a prince who could memorise *Purana* at the age of ten.

Interestingly, Sri Ram Chandra Shukla, the eminent historian of Hindi literature discarded the claim of the reactionary historians who even interpreted that the use of Purana was done keeping in parity with the Koran, the Holy text of the Muslims.

In the course of the story the prince goes for hunting and notices a seven-coloured deer which he follows and the deer changes to a beautiful princess and disappears in a pond. The Prince starts waiting for the princess. Days and years pass and the prince refused to return. The king fails to persuade his son and in turn builds a temple for him. The temple, as the poet mentions, had relief motif of different Hindu Gods and Goddesses.

The old maid of the Prince at last is able to give some information about the lost princess and at last on a full-moon day the princess comes to the pond to take her bath along with her six sisters. The prince steals her clothes and persuades her to marry him and in turn gives him his clothes. The clothes of the princess become symbolic of her liberty and freedom.

The prince then goes to visit his father and keeps the old maid in guard. Mrigavati somehow cajoles the maid and leaves with her clothes and tells the maid that the prince should find her to win her back.

The story takes different turn and the Prince follows the Gorakhpanthi saints, faces

demons and even had to get married to another princess. The Prince ultimately finds Mrigavati and then they had children, then the second wife Rupman was accepted and they all returned to the Prince Kunwar's own palace. The prince then dies. The two princesses perform Sati and the story ends again in the Sufi allegory of moksha.

The interesting part of the long story is how a Muslim poet interweaves the life of Hindu religiosity with the text of a Sufi *masnavi*.

The illustrations of the Bharat Kala Bhavan is done in the folk style but again interestingly was able to portray the life of common man at its best. The illustrations do not mention any date and was perhaps executed between AD 1540 and 1570. The text is done in Kaithi dialect and *Devanagri* script.[10] The text mentions about the literary milieu of the Sharqi's of Jaunpur. The illustrations have much in common with the *Aranyak Parvan* text of AD 1516 and definitely fall in the genre of *Chaurapanchasika* style.[11]

The text is definitely not royal in character. Different painters of the same family may have worked together for the illustrations. The hands of the painters differ though there is a definite central control. The illustration interestingly could show the class disparity within the society by intelligently differentiating the colour tones of the skin, clothes and ornaments and even the position of the characters within the area of illustration.

Thus the social history of the period just before the advent of the Mughals can be well understood by these two illustrated *masnavi* giving very little scope for conservative history.

---

10. Karl Khandalavala, 'The Mrigavat of Bharat Kala Bhavan As a Social Document and its Date and Provenance' in *CHHAVI: Golden Jubilee Volume*, Benaras, 1981.

11. Karl Khandalavala, and Moti Chandra, *An Illustrated Aranyaka Parvana in the Asiatic Society of Bombay*, The Asiatic Society of Bombay, 1974.
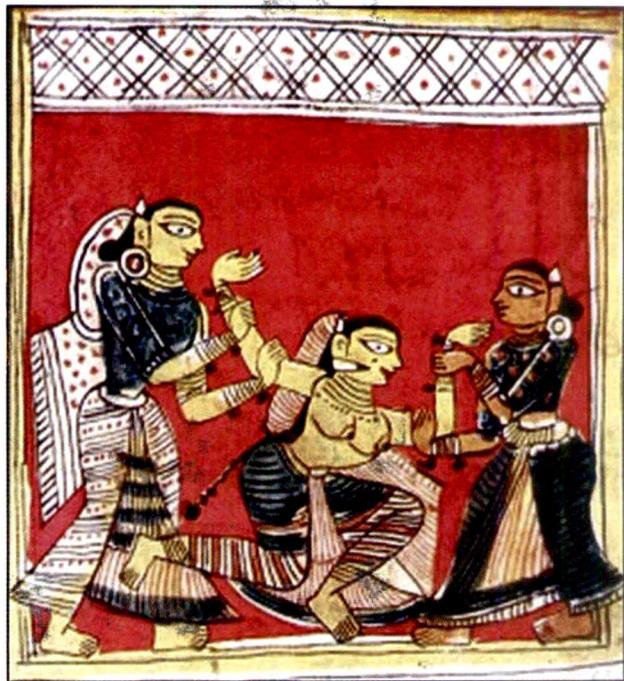
Mrigavat, photo courtesy Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benaras Hundu University, Varanasi

Mrigavat, photo courtesy Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benaras Hundu University, Varanasi

Laurachanda, photo courtesy Chandigarh State Museum, Chandigarh

Development of Secular Architecture under Akbar

SYED ALI NADEEM REZAVI

Let me at the outset lay down what I mean by the term 'secular architecture' when I use it in the context of this paper. The term secular has various connotations: sometimes it is used concerning those not members of the clergy; it is also used for things not spiritual or ecclesiastical. In this sense the term secular architecture has been used to signify 'civil' architecture, i.e. structures other than tombs, mosques and other religious buildings. Another meaning assigned to the term 'secular' is 'not bound by monastic rules'; and I use the term loosely in this context: not bound by any single tradition but drawing inspiration from various and varied traditions.

The syncretic tendencies, so central to the Mughals, appear to have started in right interest during the reign of Akbar.

The towns in his India depending on their size were generally of two types. A big town, or a city, was usually known as *balda*,[1] while a medium or small town was called a *qasba*.[2] According to a contemporary estimate, during Akbar's reign, there were 120 *baldas* and 3,200 *qasbas*.[3]

These towns (whether *balda* or a *qasba*) generally were centres of commerce,[4] and having a number of mercantile classes as its residents.[5] These towns, apart from the nobles and Mughal bureaucracy, were inhabited by a multitude of religious scholars, both Hindu and Muslim,[6] artisans and craftsmen both skilled and unskilled, some self-employed, others

1. Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, ed. Blochmann, *Bibliotheca Indica*, Calcutta, 1867-77, vol. II, p. 240; *Tuzuk-i Jahāngīrī*, ed. Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan, Ghazipur and Aligarh, 1863-64, p. 210; Mu'tamad Khan, *Iqbālnāmā-i Jahāngīrī*, Nawal Kishore (ed.), Lucknow, 1870, p. 115; 'Abdul Hamid Lahori, *Bādshāhnāmā*, *Bib. Ind.*, Calcutta, 1866-72, vol. I, pt. i, p. 156; 'Ali Muhammad Khan, *Mīrāt-i Ahmadī*, ed. Nawab Ali, Baroda, 1927, vol. I, p.168; *Mīrāt* (Suppl.), pp. 11-12, etc.

2. *Ain-i Akbari*, op. cit., I, p. 434; Sujan Rai Bhandari, *Khulāsat ut Tawārīkh*, ed. Zafar Hasan, 1918, pp. 38-9.

3. Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqāt-i Akbari*, ed. B. De, *Bib. Ind.*, Calcutta, 1913-35, vol. III, pp. 545-6.

4. Abul Fazl, *Akbarnāmā*, *Bib.Ind.*, Calcutta, 1873-87, vol. II, p. 356; *Ain-i Akbari*, op. cit., II, p. 240; Francois Pelsaert, *Remonstratie or Jahangir's India*, tr. Moreland & Geyl, Cambridge, 1925, p. 9.

5. See for example Manrique, *Travels of Manrique S.J.*, tr. C.E. Luard & Hosten, London, 1914, vol. II, p. 140.

6. See Abdul Qadir Badauni, *Muntakhab ut Tawārīkh*, ed. Ahmad Ali & Lees, *Bib. Ind.*, Calcutta, 1864-69, vol. II, pp. 206-7, 275-76, etc.; *Ain-i Akbari*, op. cit., pp. 268-70; Pelsaert, p. 77; Tavernier, *Travels in India, 1640-67*, tr. V. Ball, London, 1925, vol. II, p. 242.

in the service of the state.[7] The mercantile class was probably one of the largest sections of these urban settlements. A morphological study of the Mughal towns shows that this large mercantile and non-bureaucratic sections of the population inhabited areas within the core of the town within the ramparts of the city-walls. The situating of the habitation of the mercantile houses within the encompassing city-walls reveals a close symbiosis of the mercantile (generally Hindu) with bureaucratic ruling (generally Muslim) classes in the Mughal Empire.

Within the fortified towns, the merchants, craftsmen, professionals, and artisans however lived in separate wards or *muhallās*. Thus we hear of *Chhīpitolas* (ward of cloth-printers), *Tēlī wārās* (ward of oil-pressers), *Mochi wārās* (shoe-maker's ward), *Jhaveri* or *Jauhari wārās* (goldsmith's ward) in almost all the Mughal towns like Agra, Lahore, and Shahjahanabad. It is also interesting to note that although in the early Mughal towns like Fatehpur Sikri and Agra, the centre of the town was reserved for the residential areas of the nobility and the powerful bureaucracies, and the peripheral areas, away from the centre, were reserved for the others. Morphologically, another factor worth considering is that although the *muhallās* and the wards were divided on the basis of the professions, there does not appear to have been a division based on religious affiliations. Pelsaert is very categorical when, during the reign of Jahangir, while describing the city of Agra, he states:

'...the whole place is closely built over and inhabited, Hindu mingled with Moslems, the rich with the poor...'.[8]

This inter-mixing of various religions in the same neighbourhood was not confined only to the professional and mercantile classes. The houses of the Hindu and Muslim nobles were also in close proximity to each other. Pelsaert while describing Agra mentions the *havelis* of various nobles near the fort. His list includes the names of Raja Bhoj Singh (?), the father of Rai Ratan, Raja Kishandas, Khwaja Bansi, Raja Bet Singh (?), Raja Man Singh, and Raja Madho Singh along with those of Bahadur Khan, Ibrahim Khan, I'tiqad khan, I'tibar Khan, Baqar Khan, Mahabat Khan, etc.[9]

Naturally, this living in close proximity to each other must have led to a better understanding of each other's ethos and culture.

Although the process of syncretization of various religious 'communities' in urban areas

---

7. *Ain-i Akbari*, I, pp. 294-301; *Mīrāt*, op. cit., I, pp. 286-87; See also Manrique, op.cit., II, p. 147; Tavernier, op. cit., II, p. 73; Pelsaert, op. cit., p. 46.

8. Pelsaert, op. cit., p. 1

9. Pelsaert, op. cit., pp. 2-4.

had started much earlier than the establishment of the Mughal Empire,[10] the real process appears to have started during the rule of Akbar.

Since the age of twenty, Akbar had been attracted towards Hindu ascetics, yogis, *sanyāsis*, as well as *qalandars* and Sufis. He would often seek the guidance of the ulema and appears to have been eager to search passionately for 'Reality' wherever he thought he might find it.[11]

A passage contained in the *Akbarnāmā* throws sufficient light on Akbar's mentality vis-à-vis the non-Muslim inhabitants of his empire. At the time of the revoking of the pilgrimage tax in August 1563, Akbar is credited to have remarked:

'Although the folly of a sect might be clear, yet, as they had no conviction that they were on the wrong path, to demand money from them, and to put a stumbling block in the way of something they had made a means of approach to the sublime threshold of Unity, and which they considered as the worship of the Creator, was disapproved by the discriminating intellect and was a mark of not doing the will of God.'[12]

Jiziya was abolished in March 1564. Abul Fazl at this juncture while dealing with the causes of its abolition insightfully says:

'At the present day, owing to the blessing of the abundant goodwill and graciousness of the lord of the age (Akbar), those who belong to other religions have, like those of one mind and one religion, girded the loins of devotion and service. They exert themselves for the advancement of the (Mughal) dominion, so how can those dissenters, whose separation is founded merely on habit and whose zeal and devotion is real, be classed with the old faction which cherished mortal enmity, and be the subject of contempt and slaughter?'[13]

This type of syncretic argument is carried forward by Abul Fazl in his *dastur ul 'amal* included in the *Mīrāt-i Ahmadī* as 'Farmān of Akbar to the Governors':

'...no interference should be made with the creed, religion and faith of God's creatures, for a wise man does not intentionally suffer damage to himself an injurious path in matters of religion, which are permanent? If he is on a right path, he is not violating the truth, but if the (governor) is right, the man has unwittingly chosen for himself a different

---

10. During the reign of Sikandar Lodi, a Brahmin identified as Dunkar, used to impart instructions on books of Islamic learning (*kutub-i 'ilmi*) (Badauni, op. cit., I, p. 323) while another Brahmin, Lodhan, asserted that Islam was as true a religion as his own (*Tabaqat-i Akbari*, op. cit., I, pp. 322-3) while the governor of Lakhnau, Ahmad Khan, son of Mubarak Lodi, went to the extent of abjuring Islam (ibid., I, p. 331).

11. *Akbarnama*, op. cit., I, p. 153; For details on Akbar's thought see Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims in Akbar's Reign with special reference to Abul Fazl*, New Delhi, 1975.

12. *Akbarnama*, op. cit., II, p. 190.

13. Ibid., II, pp. 203-4.

path. The man in that case has been suffering from ignorance and deserves mercy and help. The situation does not warrant his punishment or rejection. They (governors) should be friends to the virtuous and sincere fellows of every section of the society.'[14]

In 1575, the famous *Ibādatkhāna* was constructed at Fatehpur Sikri where the theological discussions and religious debates were commenced.[15] Initially, the participants were only the Sunni ulema but subsequently the Shi'i ulema were also allowed to join the debates:

> 'The discussion passed beyond the scope of the controvercies of the Sunnis and Shi'is, Hanafis and Shafi'is, and lawyers and philosophers; they attacked the very basis of the faith.'[16]

By 1578, the *Ibādatkhāna* debates were opened to other religions as well. Sufis, *hakims* (philosophers), jurists, Sunnis, Shi'is, Brahmins, Jains, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians and others began to participate in the discussions.[17] As a result of these inter-religious debates, according to Badauni, Akbar was convinced that:

> '...there are wise men to be found at hand in all religions, and men of asceticism and recipients of revelation and workers of miracles among all nations. Truth is the inhabitant of every place; and how could it be right to consider it as necessarily confined to one religion or creed, especially to one which had only recently made its appearance and has not yet endured a thousand years? And why assert one thing and deny another, and claim pre-eminence for things which are not essentially pre-eminent?'[18]

Monserrate, however, appears to be more accurate when he correctly remarked:

> 'He (Akbar) cared little that in allowing everyone to follow his own religion he was in reality violating all religions.'[19]

The development of such thinking at the state level was bound to have its effect on the urban life of Mughal India. A cosmopolitan culture was bound to emerge. Probably it is in this context that the morphology of the Mughal towns and the emerging trends in architecture are to be placed and understood.

Monserrate while describing the towns which he passed through is struck by two festivals being celebrated very conspicuously. Incidentally, both these celebrations which

---

14. Abul Fazl, *Maktubat-i Allami*, Delhi, 1846, vol. I, pp. 57-64; *Mirat*, op. cit., I, p. 166.

15. Ahmad Thattavi, *Tarīkh-i Alfī*, MS., Ethé, 112, 110, Rieu, 117 (a), vol. II, p. 311; Arif Qandhari, *Tarikh-i Akbari*, Rampur, 1962, pp. 40-1.

16. Badauni, op. cit., II, p. 255.

17. See for example Monserrate, *The Commentary of Father Monserrate*, tr. J. S. Hoyland and S.N. Banerjee, Oxford, 1922, p. 182.

18. Badauni, op. cit., II, p. 256.

19. Monserrate, op. cit., p. 142.

he describes were of communities which are traditionally held to have been discriminated against or at least not officially favoured by the Mughal authorities. The first festivity which he describes is the observance of *Muharram*:

'They (the grandsons of the Prophet) were thereupon cruelly tortured by the unbelievers (as the Musalmans call us and were compelled) to walk with bare feet over hot coals. For this reason the Musalmans fast for nine days, only eating pulse; and on certain of these days some of them publicly recite the story of the sufferings of Asson (Hasan) and Hossan from a raised platform, and their words stir the whole assembly to lamentation and tears. On the last day of the festival funeral pyres are erected and burnt one after the other. The people jump over these, and afterwards scatter the glowing ashes with their feet. Meanwhile, they shriek "Asson Hossen" with wild and savage cries.'[20]

This is the first detailed description of the *Matam* (mourning rites) on fire and *rauza khwani* from the *minbar* (pulpit) which became quite popular during the nineteenth century. From this account it is clear that by Akbar's reign the custom of walking barefoot on fire with *'alams* during *Muharram* had already begun to be performed openly. The confidence of the Shi'i during the reign of Akbar can be gauged from the fact that Qazi Nurullah repeatedly opposed the observance of *taqiyya* in India. He argued that it was hampering the growth and propagation of the Shi'i faith.[21] In a letter written by him and sent to another Shi'i theologian, Mulla Qausi Shustari, the Qazi wrote a *qasida*:

'Blessed be the Emperor whose patronage in Hind has not made my *faith* dependent on *taqiyya*.'[22]

The second festival which Monserrate described was the celebration of the popular Hindu festival of Holi which he calls '*Idaean*':

...during a space of fifteen days they are at liberty freely to cast dust upon themselves and upon whoever passes by. They plaster with mud their own bodies and those of any person they may meet. They also squirt a red dye out of hollow reeds. Having thus degraded themselves they come at length, on the fifteenth day, to the most abominable part of the whole festival. On this day they dedicate a tree, of a species somewhat similar to the palm, to that Mother of the Gods, who is called by many names, (the ancient Romans knew her as Cybele, and the Great Mother and "Idaea"). Such superstition is indeed senseless and absurd. When the tree has been dedicated, they make offerings to it as though it were a god. At last, having vowed that they will dedicate

---

20. Monserrate, op. cit., pp. 21-2.

21. *Majalisul Mu'minin*, Tehran, A.H. 1299/A.D. 1882, pp. 2-3; Bakhtawar Khan, *Mirat al-'Alam*, ed. Sajida Alvi, Lahore, 1979, vol. II, p. 439. For a biographical sketch and Philosophy of Nurullah Shustari, see Saiyyid Sibtul Hasan, *Tazkira-i Majid*, 5th ed., Karachi, 1984 and Rizvi, The *Socio-Intellectual History of Isna'Asharis*, op. cit., vol. I, ch. V.

22. Nawab Inayat Khan Rasikh, *Bayaz*, Habibganj Colln., Azad Library, AMU, Aligarh, f.92(b).

another tree the following year, they build up huge piles of logs, as high as towers, in front of the houses, in places where three ways meet. When night comes they pace round these piles singing; and finally burn to ashes the consecrated (or rather most execrable) tree.[23]

Indo-Muslim architecture, as it developed in Medieval India, heavily borrowed stylistic, idiomatic (characteristic forms, architectonic and decorative), axiomorphic (form appropriate to the purpose of the structure) and aesthetic traditions from Iranian, Trans-Oxanian and regional Indian styles. This borrowing is much heavier after the establishment of the Mughal dynasty, especially during the reign of Akbar. Mughal architecture borrowed extensively from Delhi Sultanate, Sharqi, Gujarat, Malwa, Bengal, and Rajasthani styles as well as from styles abroad, so much so that it has itself been defined as a synthesis of this foreign and indigenous style.[24]

A study of the Mughal architecture reveals that the Mughals, who considered them to be the heirs of the Timurid tradition, borrowed heavily from the Iranian style which had developed under the Ilkhanids, Timurids, and Muzaffarids. When Babur marched into India, he brought along with him two Iranian architects, Ustad Mir Mirak Ghiyas of Herat and Ustad Shah Muhammad of Khurasan.[25] According to Lisa Golombek, the Shaibanids of Bukhara were a conduit for the transmission of Timurid architectural forms to the Mughals.[26] It should be borne in mind that much of the synthesis of the Iranian style with the Indo-Muslim style of architecture in India took place only till the reign of Akbar. The reign of Shahjahan is marked out by the heavy influence of the indigenous styles on the Mughal architecture.

Historically speaking, there are two *genera* of arcuate styles, the Roman and the Parthian, which heavily influenced the emergence of the 'Islamic' architecture. A sub-*genera* (or 'complex') of the Parthian Genus, the Iranian style of architecture, which includes the Ilkhanid (Mongol), Timurid, and post-Timurid traditions, became a matrix for the Turkish and Indian regional styles, of which the Mughal or 'Pan Indo-Islamic' variant was the most developed. The Timurid tradition would include elements of architecture which Timur and his successors, the Muzaffarids of Fars, Kirman and Isfahan, and Timur's grandson Shahrukh imbibed while in Persia and later applied in Samarqand, Bukhara, and Herat. The post-

---

23. Monserrate, op. cit., pp. 22-3.

24. See for example Ebba Koch, *Mughal Architecture: An Outline of its History and Development (1526-1858)*, Prestel-Verlag, Munich, 1991; Catherine B. Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India*, being vol. I, pt. 4 of *The New Cambridge History of India*, OUP, 1995. See also Lisa Golombek, 'From Tamerlane to the Taj Mahal', in *Essays in Islamic Art and Architecture in Honor of Katherina Otto-Dorn*, ed. Abbas Daneshwari, Malibu, 1981 (reprinted in Monica Juneja, *Architecture in Medieval India*, New Delhi, 2001, pp. 315-27).

25. *Baburnama*, (tr.) A.S. Beveridge, New Delhi, 1970, pp. 343, 642.

26. Lisa Golombek, op. cit., pp. 43-50.

Timurid variant of Iranian style developed under the patronage of the Shaibanids and Astrakhanids. The Safavid variant was the culmination of the Iranian style of architecture.[27]

Akbar's period was a period when a large borrowing of 'Indian' traditions in the field of art, literature, painting, music and architecture took place. The 'Indian' features are seamlessly diffused in the newly emerging Iranian and Timurid idiomatic, axiomorphics, and aesthetics.

The towns and cities which started developing from the reign of Akbar appear to have been influenced by two sources of urban design: the *chaharbagh* and the Mughal encampment.

The *chaharbagh* was first introduced in India by Babur who constructed a number of them at Agra and nearby places. One of the earliest gardens on *chaharbagh* pattern to be laid out by Babur was the *Bagh-i Fath* situated between the lake and the ridge at Fatehpur Sikri. Rectangular in plan it comprises intersecting water channels and *khiyabans*. In the centre an Iranian-inspired pavilion (*baradari*) is constructed. Aligned on an east-west axis, it is surrounded on all its sides with a cloistered *riwaq* (verandah) pierced with an entrance in the north. The water channels, which are provided with *mahi-pusht abshars* (fish-scaled chutes), are connected with a step-well (*baoli*) in the west and a well (*chah*) in the east.[28] A more elaborate *chaharbagh* of Babur, the *Bagh-i Nilufar* (Lotus Garden) survives at Dholpur (Rajasthan). Two other gardens of his which have been identified are the so-called Rambagh (Aram Bagh or Bagh-i Gul Afshan, later renovated by Nurjahan Begum and thus renamed as Bagh-i Nur Afshan) and the Bagh-i Hasht Bihisht which are located on the left-bank of Yamuna at Agra.[29] The *chaharbagh* introduced by Babur not only became a major element of urban landscape under the Mughals, but also inspired the layout of the Mughal cities themselves. The centripetal symmetry of the *chaharbagh* was invoked also in planning a Mughal city. The organizing instruments of the garden, such as the axes, joints defined by pavilions, platforms, and walkways were transformed and enlarged architecturally into roads, caravanserais, monumental structures, and quarters.[30] The cross-shaped or quadri-partite symmetry, encountered first Fatehpur Sikri and subsequently at Shahajahanabad, reminds us of Isfahan of the Safavid period with its *Maidan* (promenade) and the

27. For a detailed study of foreign influences on Medieval Indian Architecture see S. Ali Nadeem Rezavi, 'Iranian Influence on Medieval Indian Architecture', *A Shared Heritage The Growth of Civilization in India and Iran*, ed. Irfan Habib, New Delhi, 2002.

28. For a study and survey of Mughal gardens, see S. Ali Nadeem Rezavi, 'Exploring the Mughal Gardens at Fatehpur Sikri', *PIHC*, Bangalore session, 1997. Also see S.A.N. Rezavi, *Fatehpur Sikri Revisited*, OUP, 2013.

29. See for example Ebba Koch, op. cit., pp. 32-3; Catherine Asher, op. cit., pp. 22-4; See also Catherine Asher, 'Babur and the Timurid Char Bagh: Use and meaning', *Environmental Design*, op. cit., no. 11, pp. 56-73.

30. Attilio Petruccioli, 'The Process Evolved by the Control Systems of Urban Design in the Mogul Epoch in India: the Case of Fatehpur Sikri', *Environmental Design*, ed. A. Petruccioli, Roma, Italy, 1984, pp. 18-27; S.A.N. Rezavi, *Fatehpur Sikri Revisited*, op. cit., pp. 25-45.

chaharbaghs. The use of *chaharbagh* as an instrument of urban landscaping and town planning involves the Iranian imagery of Paradise which is central to the Parthian genus of architecture.

Idiomatically and axiomorphically, these *chaharbagh* gardens, with their intersecting water-channels lined with walk-ways (*khiyabans*), platforms, water-chutes, tanks and fountains, flower-beds, fruit-bearing trees and foliages, all surrounded by screen walls and gateways were to become the standard setting for Mughal tombs. In these gardens, the focus was the centre, marked by the construction of a large platform. In its funerary variant this central platform was replaced by the mausoleum. In the Delhi Sultanate we have the tombs of Firuz Tughluq at Delhi and the tomb of Sher Shah Sur at Sasaram, where as an allusion to Paradise the tombs were constructed in the middle of water-tanks. Typical examples of such funerary gardens from the Mughal period are Humayun's tomb at Delhi, the tombs of Akbar and Mariam at Sikandara (Agra), the tomb of I'timadud Daulah at Agra and the tomb of Jahangir at Shahdara, Lahore.

Being constantly on the move, the Mughal encampment appears to have been another principal inspiration for the Mughals under Akbar when they built their towns. Being one of the first organized towns to develop, Fatehpur Sikri appears to have drawn on the various principles used in setting up of the camp cities. Even the vocabulary applied by the Persian sources to describe the permanent stone structures is often the same as was used for the temporary portable dwellings. The public audience hall (*diwan-i am*) is sometimes referred to as *bargah-i am* (the large audience tent),[31] the sleeping or retiring room (*khwabgah*) of the emperor as *khalvat kada-i khas*[32] (the tent of privacy), the harem (female quarters) as *Saraparda*[33] *Saraparda-i Ismat*[34] (the chaste screened-in area), *Shabistan-i daulat*[35] (the imperial bed-chamber or harem) or *Shabistan-i Iqbal*,[36] (the fortunate bed-chamber or harem), which were all terms used for different categories of tents. Explaining a Mughal encampment, Abul Fazl writes:

'They pitch the *Shabistan-i iqbal* (the *haremsara*), the *daulatkhana* (the Imperial palace or quarters) and the *Naqqarkhana* (the drum house) all within a distance of 1530 *gaz* (yards). To the right and left of these, and behind them, an open space of 300 yards is reserved for guards. Within the principal enclosure, at a distance of 100 yards from the centre, are pitched the tents of Maryam Makani (Akbar's mother), Gulbadan Begum (Akbar's sister), other chaste ladies, and the tents of Prince Daniyal; to the right, those

31. *Ain-i Akbari,* I, p. 8.

32. Ibid., p. 105.

33. *Tabaqat-i Akbari,* II, 367.

34. Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat-i Akbari,* ed. B. De, Calcutta, 1931, p. 275; *Akbarnama,* III, p. 66.

35. *Akbarnama,* III, p. 118.

36. *Ain-i Akbari,* I, p. 26.

of Prince Sultan Salim; and to the left, those of Prince Shah Murad. Behind the tents, at some distance, the *buyutat* (*karkhanas*) (workshops) are placed; and at a further distance of 30 yards behind them, at the four corners of the camp, the *bazars* (the markets). The nobles encamped on all sides, according to them rank outside the complex reserved for the Imperial use.'[37]

It is quite interesting to note that during the reign of Akbar, the ground plans of the structures were generally Iranian, Central Asian and Timurid, while the elevations and surface decorations were mostly based on indigenous designs and patterns. In fact, the two were so seamlessly joined that the result was quite unique and pleasing.

One of the most important axiomorphic impressions of Iranian tradition on the Mughal Architecture was in the form of a plan which has been labelled *hasht bihisht* or nonipartite plan.[38].

The first monumental structure of the period is the tomb of Humayun. It in a way lays out the general rule of the things to follow: it is based on this unique Timurid plan blended with an indigenous elevation.

In this plan the layout, which is preferably an irregular octagon (a chamfered square, *musamman-i baghdadi*), is divided by four intersecting constructional lines into nine parts, comprising a domed octagonal chamber in the centre, rectangular open halls (in the form of either *pishtaq* or flat-roofed *aiwans* supported by pillars) and double storied octagonal vaulted chambers in the corners. This plan provided the buildings a radial symmetry which hitherto was missing. The radial symmetry was further emphasized by the axial and radial passages which linked the nine chambers with each other. Typical Timurid examples of this were the tomb of Abu Nasr Parsa at Balkh (c.1460), the *Ishratkhana* at Samarqand (1464) and tomb of Sharif Abdullah at Herat (1487). Direct influence of the tomb of Abu Nasr Parsa is found during the Mughal period in, at least four tombs, three of which are in Delhi. The Sabz Burj and Nili Gumbad tombs (c.1530-40) near Humayun's mausoleum, the 'Afsarwala tomb (1560's), again at Delhi and the tomb of Shamsher Khan at Batala (1588-89) have a non-partite plan with angular units as semi-octagonal niches. As at the Abu Nasr tomb, their central chamber is on a square plan.

The most famous Mughal monumental funerary structures constructed on this Timurid plan is the Humayun's tomb at Delhi. This plan was later perfected during the reign of Shahjahan to give shape to the Taj Mahal at Agra.

The plan of Humayun's tomb also appears to have been inspired from a 'boat-house' which according to Humayun's court historian, was contrived on the orders of the emperor himself. Khwand Amir writes:

---

37. *Ain-i Akbari,* I, p. 27.

38. See Ebba Koch, *Mughal Architecture,* op. cit., pp. 44-5; Jose Pereira, *Islamic Sacred Architecture: A Stylistic History,* New Delhi, 1994, pp. 236-7.

'Of all the wonderful innovations (*ikhtara'at*) prepared in that time on the Imperial orders, which owing to their novelty (*gharaib*) and beauty (*nazahat*) have spread to all parts of the world was the one which on royal directions, the royal carpenters constructed with the help of four boats in the river Jamuna (*Jayhun*). On each of these (boats) were constructed platforms (*saffa*) which are double-storied *chahartaqs* of elegent style. These four boats were joined with each other in such a way that these *chahartaq* (platforms) face each other. And in between each two of the four boats, another apartment (*taq*) was produced. Consequently, an octagonal tank (*hauz*) resulted in the middle. And these *chahartaqs* were decorated with fine cloths and other valuable objects, due to which the mind of the intelligent (*aql-i darrak*) would be amazed by its beauty and magnificence.'[39]

If we compare the plan of Humayun's tomb which was designed by Mirza Ghiyas, the master architect who had accompanied Babur to India, the tomb appears to be a copy of Humayun's boat-house. The *chahartaqs* of the boat pavilions were transformed into stone double-storied vaulted octagonal corner chambers. The four 'apartments' connecting the boats were transformed into rectangular side chambers, and the central octagonal tank was now transformed into the octagonal domed sepulchural chamber. The Taj Mahal on the other hand is a single *baghdadi octagon* (chamfered square) laid out in the typical non-partite plan. The Iranian axiomorphics are brilliantly coupled with indigenous idiomatic and aesthetics.

However, in its elevation, the tomb of Humayun is quite indigenous. Instead of the tiled, faience or brightly coloured decorations preferred in Iran or Central Asia we get the diffused yellow and dull coloured facades which relieve the monotony of the red sandstone structures of the Akbari period, which blended more appropriately the harsh climate of the country. Aesthetically, the tile and faience mosaic of the Iranian style was replaced in Mughal India by the red and white bichromy or a marble monochromy which is so typical of Akbari structures and monuments (e.g. Humayun's tomb; Badshahi Darwaza, Jami' Masjid, Fatehpur Sikri; Jahangiri Mahal, Agra Fort). The Buland Darwaza at Fatehpur Sikri, however, depicts a red-yellow bichromy.

Another example of a non-partite tomb is the tomb of Anarkali at Lahore, which again, is one of the most ingeniously, planned Mughal structures.

The non-partite plan was also applied by the Mughals to tombs which were regular octagons. The tomb of Shah Quli Khan at Narnaul, tomb of Haji Muhammad at Sirhind and tomb of Qutbuddin Muhammad Khan at Vadodara are some of the funerary structures of Akbar's reign which were regular octagons with non-partite plans.

This plan was applied to palace buildings like Akbar's pavilion at the Ajmer Fort and the Buland Darwaza at Fatehpur Sikri, and Rani ka Mahal at Allabad Fort. Pleasure pavilions

---

39. Khwand Mir, *Qanun-i Humayuni*, ed. Hidayat Husain. Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1940, p. 52.

and water palaces like Hawa Mahal at Fatehpur Sikri, Shah Quli's water palace at Narnaul and I'timad Khan's water palace (popularly known as Burhia ka Tal) at Etmadpur (Agra) were also constructed on this pattern.

The non-partite plan was also applied to square-structures. Akbar's Ajmer pavilion and Shah Quli's water palace were square-structures. The best example of this type is, however, the tomb of Itimadud Daulah at Agra. These square non-partite structures were probably constructed in the style of such as Khanqah of Qasim Shaikh at Kermin, Bukhara and the tomb of Ulugh Beg and Abdur Razzaq in the vicinity of Ghazni.

This plan was applied to a large number of Mughal *hammams*, for example the *hammam* of Abdur Rahim Khan-i Khanan at Burhanpur and the Imperial *hammams* at Fatehpur Sikri.

Two further Iranian idiomatic innovations, the '*arch-and-panel*' articulation[40] and the stellate vaults (the *chahartaq*) based on cruciform domed-chambers, found wide acceptance under the Mughals.

The Iranian architects of the thirteenth and fourteenth century had imposed order on architectonic and decorative forms by a consistent system of articulation which had a five fold relationship between arch and panel, and from arch to arch. In this system the theme was primarily curved and arcuate (arch) and only secondarily rectangular or trabeated (or panelled). By repeating the identical arcuate patterns, the 'arch-and-panel' idiom, aesthetically and idiomatically unified the surfaces and voids of a structure, while controlling the decoration covering its walls. The five features of its relationship, alignment (when the arch symmetrically alternates with a panel or an arch vertically or horizontally), empanelling (arch contained within a panel), multiplication (progressive increase upwards of arches, etc.), enframing (arch framed by arch) and intersecting (arch crossing arch) initially found their way into Sultanate architecture (e.g. the *Alai Darwaza* at *Quwwatul Islam*), but gained much greater prominence under Akbar. The most prominent presence of this system is found on the farade and the side bays of the Buland Darwaza, at Fatehpur Sikri and the exterior farade of Jahangiri Mahal, at Agra Fort. However, in these Akbari structures, the typical Iranian arch-and-panel system was modified by the traditional Indian articulation of wedge-shaped fluted or octagonal shafts technically known as 'quoins' which are shaped like columns. These quoin shafts divided the whole area horizontally and acted as pivots for knitting together the planes of the façade.

As far as the *chahartaq* is concerned, it was formed by the Iranians through intersecting arches. Generally, a square-vaulted chamber is spanned by four large intersecting arches, resting on massive wide piers, form a cruciform with an open square in the centre. This square is then turned into a polygon or circle with the help of smaller arches, supplemented by the decorative ribs rising from the main arches. In this *chahartaq* plan, the Iranian architects improvized a new type of a vaulting system, now generally known as the

---

40. For a discussion of 'Arch-and-Panel System', see Jose Pereira, op. cit., pp. 249-50, also pp. 92, 100.

khurasanian vault. The *khurasanian* (multi-partite) vault was invoked by the Timurid architects by reviving the Ilkhanid and Seljuq stelliform vault on the system of intersecting arches. This type of vault consists of four large intersecting ribs, which create a central vaulted area, four lozenge-shaped squinches and four rectangular fields. In this plan the centre of each side of the square contains an arched recess, the width of which is equivalent to the diameter of the dome, which is supported by the four arches which in turn spring from the forward edge of the recess arches, each adjacent pair intersecting to form the square. The secondary ribs springing from the haunches of the arches converts the square into an octagon by a series of lozenge-shaped squinches. At the second stage, sixteen fan-shaped pendentives complete the transition to the circular dome. With this system the vaulting techniques reach perfection. The need of supporting walls is eliminated and the dome now sits directly on the four arches. The first building based on this pattern was the twelfth century Jami' Masjid of Isfahan. Under the Timurids, this type of the vault was employed in the Bibi Khanum Mosque at Samarqand (1398-1405), the Musalla of Gauhar Shad at Herat (1417-38), the mosque of Turbat-i Shaikh Jam (1440-43) and the Madrasa at Khargird (1442). In the Mughal Empire, we find its occurrence in the imperial *hammam* (the so-called Hakim's baths), the Private *hammam* in the *daulatkhana*, the *hammam* attached to the *Haremsara* (Jodhbai Palace), all at Fatehpur Sikri. as well as at Akbar's *khilwatgah* in Allahabad Fort, the Barber's tomb in the garden of Humayun's tomb and the Govind Dev Temple at Vrindavan, near Mathura (1590s).

As far as the residential structures are concerned, it appears that the Akbari architects preferred the indigenous plan known in India since the Mauryan times, the well-known *catuhsala* plan. It was the plan on which the Buddhist *viharas* were constructed. It was a plan in which the structure rotated around a centrally located courtyard. The so-called 'Jodhbai Palace' (the *Shabistan-i Iqbal*) at Fatehpur Sikri and the so-called 'Jahangiri Mahal' at Agra Fort are the best examples of this plan for the reign of Akbar.

According to Ebba Koch the building of the so-called 'Jodhbai Palace' is inspired by the Gujarat-Sultanate architecture which in turn had taken sculptural ideas heavily from the Hindu and Jain temples of the region. A case in point would be the buildings of Mahmud Begra which survive at Sarkhej.[41]

A closer and more direct cousin of this Akbari palace is the Gujari Mahal of Man Singh Tomar at Gwalior which too appears to have been heavily influenced by the Gujarati prototypes. Abul Fazl however asserts that the palaces at Agra Fort, at least, were fashioned after (*tarh*) Gujarat and Bengal. He does not mention Gwalior as one of the sources.

Yet, on the other hand, the Jodhbai Palace as well as the Jahangiri Mahal at Agra Fort may also be linked to the Iranian four-*aiwan* plan. Axiomorphic replication of the Persian

---

41. See Ebba Koch, 'The Architecural Forms', *Fatehpur Sikri*, ed. Michael Brand & Glenn D. Lowry, *Marg*, 1987, pp. 121-48; *idem*, 'Influence on Mughal Architecture', *Ahmadabad*, ed. George Michell & Snehal Shah, *Marg*, 1988, pp. 168-85.

style is quite prominent in Mughal tradition of Architecture. They are in the form of gate-houses, portals (*pishtaq*), pillared halls (*aiwans*) and plans of tombs and mosques.

In Iran and Central Asia (Trans-Oxiana), masonry buildings were constructed with 'post-and-beam' (timber) porches. Two prominent examples are Ali Qapu in the Maidan-i Shah, Isfahan and the Balyand mosque in Bukhara. Porched pillared halls, raised on slender wooden pillars were known as *talar* in Iran and *aiwan* in Trans-Oxiana. In Iran, the term *aiwan* was used for an open-fronted room with a barrel vault. The use of the term *aiwan* to designate pillared constructions was adopted by the Mughals. Most such pillared constructions in India took places during the reign of Akbar. The Badgir (Hawa Mahal) of the Jodhbai Palace, the *Chahar suffa* (Panch Mahal), the *Aiwankhana* (*Diwan-i Khas* or Jewel Treasury) the entrance to the *Naqqarkhana* near Hathipol, the *Rang Mahal*, all at Fatehpur Sikri, and the inner quadrangles of Jahangiri Mahal at Agra Fort, are examples of quadrangular *aiwans* inspired by Iranian prototypes. This building plan was executed sometimes in octagonal ways. The *Qushkhana* near the Ajmeri Darwaza at Fatehpur Sikri, the Chihilsutun in Allahabad Fort and the Shah Burj at Agra Fort are all octagonal *aiwans*.

Thus, it would not be incorrect to assert that the Akbari structures were generally constructed on Central Asian and Iranian plans while the surface decorations more or less was as per the traditions more closer at hand.

The Mughal mosques too closely followed the Iranian axiomorphic prototypes in their ground-plan. By the fourteenth century, the Iranian architects had perfected the two-and-four-*aiwan* (open-fronted construction with a barrel vault). The form of the two-*aiwan* mosque was achieved by having the sanctuary chamber with a high *pishtaq* preceded by an enclosed open quadrangle. The entrance portal (*aiwan* of the Iranian architecture) was constructed on the same axis as the *pishtaq*. The centrally located courtyard, which was also an indigenous idiom, was surrounded by double-storied cloisters (*riwaq*). Under the Mughals, this Iranian-Timurid prototype was used in conjunction with the Delhi Sultanate elements to produce a new form. Thus, in the Khairul Manazil Mosque at Delhi we find that the tall *pishtaq* of the western *liwan* and the double-storied *riwaq* are typically Timurid. The single-aisled western *liwan* was itself built on Delhi-Sultanate traditions. As in the Iranian examples, this single-aisled, five-bayed mosque has a single dome. In the Akbari Masjid near the Ajmer Dargah, the Western *liwan* with multiple aisles and a dominant dome over the nave is Timurid, while the low single-aisle cloisters are typical of Delhi-Sultanate architecture. The Jami' Masjid of Fatehpur Sikri is again a two-*aiwan* mosque, which acquired its third portal (Buland Darwaza) at a later stage.[42]

But then in India the this mosque-plan also assimilated some of the symbolism as well as the idiomatic and structural features of the Hindu temples, producing mosque structures which have no parallel elsewhere in the Islamic world. One of the features which give a

---

42. See S. Ali Nadeem Rezavi, 'Medieval Indian Architecture: Its History and Evolution', *Symposia Paper* 29, *Symposium on History of Visual Arts: Architecture, Sculpture and Paintings*, Indian History Congress, 73rd session, Mumbai, 29 December 2012.

templar character to these Indian mosques is the triplication of the sanctuary, a feature which is so characteristic of the Late Chalukyan, Kakatiyan and the Hoysala temples. The triplication of the mosque sanctuary, the western *liwan*, is indicated by its being crowned with a triad of domes, which is first encountered at the *Quwwat ul Islam* and then monumentalized under Akbar at the Jami' Mosque of Sikri. It is essential to note here that such triple-domed mosques are absent elsewhere in the Muslim world.

Secondly, we find the placement of the mosque on a high plinth or platform, which again is not encountered elsewhere outside the Indian subcontinent. This process appears to have started under the Tughluqs, re-established at Fatehpur and culminated at Shahjahanabad.

Thirdly greater sacrosanct is given to the western *liwan* through a gradual hierarchy starting from the portals. The Iranian two-*aiwan* and four-*aiwan* mosques had a cloister of arcades in two storeys, marked by the portals at its cardinal points. The height of the arcades was the same along the four sides. From the time of Akbar, the Iranian type of mosques are tempered by the Indian sense of the hierarchy: instead of two-storied cloisters on the east, north and south of the courtyard of the mosque, one new encounters a lower single-storied *riwaqs*. The gradual hierarchy is also maintained by enlarging the central dome which surmounts the nave of the main prayer chamber. The Jami' Mosque of Fatehpur Sikri is a typical example of this templar mosque in India. This perhaps more than anything else reflects the eclectic nature of the period.

This process, however, a two-way process if the temple architecture had its influence on the mosque construction, the Akbari temples were not left far behind in this process of sharing heritage and feature. The Govind Dev Temple at Vrindavan, Mathura has a typical cruciform plan covered with a well-developed Timurid *chahartaq* Khurasanian vault. This temple along with Madan Mohan Temple and Jagat Kishore temple resemble the elevations and surface decorations of Akbari red sandstone structures at Fatehpur Sikri and elsewhere.

The most distinguishing feature of the Akbari architecture was the use and combination of the post-and-beam trabeated technique of construction with the arcuate. From the 'Akbari Mahal' and 'Jahangiri Mahal' at Agra Fort to almost all the structures at Fatehpur Sikri to the Vrindavan temples, this blending of the two very diverse techniques is encountered. So much so that even when a building is domed or vaulted, the dome or the vault is deliberately hidden below a flat platform giving the structure a classic and trabeated shape. This style is further accentuated by providing heavy brackets to the drooping eaves. It seems that the Akbari architects were trying to hide the arcuate elements of the structures.

Secondly, the Akbari architect dispersed these visually hidden vaulted and domed chambers around vast and open spaces which were linked to each other through elaborate post-and-beam colonnades. Some of these colonnaded structures were superimposed to form two or more stories. Two examples of such constructions are the *Khilwatkada* structure in the *daulatkhana-i Anuptalao* and the *chaharsuffa* (Panch Mahal) in the buffer-zone between the *Shabistan-i Iqbal* and the *daulatkhana*.

The *Khilwatkada* structure is a double-platformed post-and-beam construction on top of which is constructed the *khwabgah* with a covered (hidden) circular vault. This structure appears to have been loosely based on the palace of Mahmud Begra at Sarkhej.

The *chaharsuffa* on the other hand is a four-platformed pyramidal construction which appears to have been partly inspired by (we have already seen its Central Asian connections) a double-storied platform structure overlooking the valley from the top of the hill at Vijai Mandirgarh, Bayana. Another pavilion which closely resembles, located at Khimlasa Fort in Madhya Pradesh.[43]

But such structures, as we have noted above, were also constructed in Central Asia.

However, the most distinguishing feature which can be discerned from the study of the development of architecture under Akbar is that though the post-and-beam tradition might have been derived from the local indigenous trabeated examples, the Akbari architects, known as *muhandis* (geometricians), tempered it with their recently acquired geometrical knowledge of weights and measures. The trabeated structures of Akbar are lighter and slimmer as compared to their cousins in Rajasthan-Gujarat-Malwa tradition. Secondly, as Koch puts it, the use of red sandstone, apart from its symbolic connotation of being the colour of the sovereign, 'glossed over stylistic clashes resulting from the amalgamation' of heterogeneous architectural traditions of the Timurid, Central Asian and the more indigenous styles of the Delhi Sultanate, Bengal, Rajputana, Malwa and Gujarat. The symbiotic result was the secular architecture of Akbar which was ultimately to result in the Taj, the most indigenous and famous of the Mughal monuments.

---

43. See Ebba Koch, *Mughal Architecture*, op. cit., p. 43.

Afghans in the Midst of the Mughal Rule in India

ANJONA CHATTOPADHYAY

The Afghans occupy a specially significant position in the history of the Muslim rule in India. A section of people with destructive characteristics of their own which distinguished them from their great predecessors, the Turks, as well as from their illustrious and brilliant successors, the Mughals—the Afghans introduced a new element in the social and political life of the country. The Sur Afghan rulers, in particular, made a substantial contribution to the development of the political and social institutions of India. Afghans maintained their identity throughout the period of the Mughal rule in this country and hence they had a history as a political community even after they had lost to the Mughals. Indeed their history during the Muslim rule in India remains incomplete without an appreciation of the role they played in the life of this country as rulers and as the vanquished of the Mughals.

The mountain belt in the North-West Frontier of India, known as *Roh*, was the early home of the Afghans and from that region they migrated to the plains of this country as hirelings to the Muslim conquerors beginning from the time of Subuktgin. The mountainous territory to which they originally belonged was the home of the daring and stubborn soldiers and produces the best fighting force of the world. Afghans brought a strong physique in this country and infused new vigour and energy into the life of the people in general and Muslims in particular. It was because of the remarkable fighting quality that they twice secured the sovereignty of India and although they lost to the Mughals several times, they did not submit to the position of a vanquished but stubbornly fought against their great rivals for some generations, maintaining hold on one territory or the other.

The mountain home had stamped the Afghans with some peculiarities on their character and life. They claim their origin without justification from the Semitic race. The Afghans claim to be descended from Jewish stock regarding *Afghana*, a grandson of King Saul and commander-in-chief of the famous king Solomon, as their traditional ancestor. If this pretension is accepted, then the Afghans must be considered as a section of the great Semitic race.

According to the theory of Jewish origin the descendants of *Afghana*, living in Palestine, were taken captive first by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar (586 BC). After the fall of Babylonian empire, the captive Jews came to Kohistan, the mountainous region in Afghanistan and settled there.

This theory got support on the following grounds. First, they find a striking resemblance to the Jews in the Afghans, tall and well-built body. Secondly, the common names, like Ibrahim, Musa, Yusuf, Sulaiman and particularly the existence of Sulaiman Mountain in their territory have been adduced as proof of this origin by the upholders of the theory. Moreover, similar customs and usages found among the Jews and Afghans, for example

the sprinkling of the blood of an animal over the door posts of a house where a sick person resides, and stoning to death of blasphemers. Lastly, their tribal spirit and clannish temperament are considered to strengthen the theory of the Jewish origin of the Afghans.

The theory of the Semitic origin of the Afghans does not, however, stand the test of serious analysis. The resemblance in features cannot be considered as providing a scientific criterion for grouping different peoples into one race. The Sumerians resemble the Aryans in features, though they are not considered to have any affiliation with the Aryan people. The portrait of the *Kusana* kings found in their coins has the same type of features. But they are certainly neither Afghans nor Semites.[1] Other evidence also suggests the implausibility of the theory. It seems unlikely that after their captivity, the Jews should come to mountainous Afghanistan instead of returning to their native land Palestine.

Judged by language, which is a most useful criterion for deciding the race of a people, the Afghans cannot be said to have any affiliation with the Semites. According to Grierson, the eminent linguist, *Pashtu*, the language of the Afghans, is a subgroup of the eastern group of Iranian languages.[2] *Pashtu* is an admixture of Sanskrit and Persian and this suggests the Indo-Iranian origin of the Afghans. Percy Sykes says that the Pathans are speaker of *Pashtu*.[3] The name Pathan is a linguistic term and has derived from *Pashtun* or *Pakhtun*. *Pashtun* (or *Pakhtun*) is used to denote all *Pashtu*-speaking Afghan people.[4] Hence, linguistically an Afghan is a Pathan.

The mountainous nature of the country fostered in the Afghans a tribal and individualistic spirit. Dr. C.C. Davies writes, 'The Pathan is intensely democratic and refuses to obey even his tribal chiefs, unless they are great warriors or blood-thirsty fearless desperadoes'.[5]

The poverty of the soil made the Afghans ready to leave their home. In AD 766 they occupied Peshawar and other places belonging to Raja Jayapala, the ruler of the Punjab and Kashmir. After a fruitless struggle of a few months, Jayapala, who had also to face the rising of Ghaznavid Power, made peace with the Afghans by allowing them to settle in some places of Lamaghan. The Afghans then erected a fort in the mountains of Peshawar which they called Khaibar. Later Subuktagin realized the importance of the fighting spirit in the Afghans and enrolled them in his army.

The Afghans came into prominence in the reign of Sultan Balban, who employed them as garrisons with assignment of lands for their maintenance. Alauddin Khalji had Afghan amir called Ikhtiyar-al-Din Mal Afghan shows that the Khalji sultans continued to employ the Afghans.

1. C. Collin Davies, *The Problem of the North-West Frontier*, Curzon Press, London, 1974, pp. 42-3.
2. G. A. Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India* I, Motilal Banarasidas, Patna, 1967, p. 493.
3. Sir Percy Sykes, *A History of Afghanistan* I, Macmilan & Co. Ltd. London, 1940, p. 13.
4. C. Collin Davies, *op. cit*, p. 43.
5. Ibid., p. 47.

The employment of the Afghans in large numbers in the army of the Turkish Sultanate of Delhi and the elevation of some of them to the amirate of the court must have brought fresh streams of Afghans into India. By the time of Muhammad bin Tughlaq, they became a fairly powerful community in the empire. The Afghan importance continued in the reign of Firuzshah Tughlaq.

The Afghan immigration into this country got its momentum once more with the invasion of Taimur. Thus, by the end of the fourteenth century, the Afghans had developed into a politically important community settled in northern India.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the Afghans of India were essentially a tribal people in their behaviour, social institutions, associations and political ideas. So the monarchy they established in this country represented their tribal peculiarities. Their quarrelsome nature, rough and unruly behaviour, their great attachment to their own tribes and tribal chiefs and their love of tribal independence determined the character of the Afghan monarchy in India.[6]

Babar's contact with the Afghans began in AD 1505 when he established himself as the ruler of Kabul. The people of Kabul were of heterogeneous character and the population consisted of many Afghan and non-Afghan tribes. The Afghan tribes had their own local customs and traditions. Their tribal character did not permit them to acknowledge any superior authority and owe allegiance to it. Various tribes had their own tribal leaders, who controlled them, and served as their leaders. As ruler of Kabul, Babar had to pursue a cool and calculated policy towards the Afghan chiefs. In the beginning he resorted to harsh measures but soon he realized the inadvisability of such a policy. He adopted a more diplomatic policy of conciliation and repression. In return for the maintenance of peace and tranquillity, he was willing to befriend them on equal terms. Employment in the army was opened to them, matrimonial alliance was established and local independence was sanctioned. If the hand of friendship was rejected, the severest of measures were taken against them. In response to this policy a number of Afghan chiefs surrendered to him.[7]

In order to strengthen his ties with the Afghan chiefs, Babar decided to enter into matrimonial alliance with them. In 1519, Bibi Mubarika, the daughter of Malik Shah Mansur was betrothed to him.[8] This resulted in the submission of a few other Afghan clans to him, which strengthened Babar's position in Kabul.

Since Afghan tribes were heterogeneous in character, it was difficult for Babar to pursue a uniform policy towards all the tribes. During the last 15 years (1505-20) he was mainly guided by political expediency and exigencies of the situation. He aimed at two things:

---

6. Muhammad Abdur Rahim, *The Afghans in India 1545-1631*, Pakistan Publishing House, Karachi, 1961, pp. 29, 30.

7. Babar, *Babar Nama, Memoirs of Babar* I (tr. A. S. Beveridge), Low Price Publication, New Delhi, 1970 (reprint), p. 248.

8. Ibid., p. 375.

first, to obtain submission of the various Afghans and non-Afghan tribes of the North-West Frontier and to realize annual tribute from them and secondly, to extend the sphere of his influence eastwards. The next 15 years of his life were full of hectic military activities of continuous struggle, and of conflict with rebellious and incorrigible tribes. During this period he made inroads into the North-West Frontier Region. Though he pursued the policy of coercion and conciliation, he did not enjoy rich dividends.

When he turned towards India he found the Afghans already entrenched in various regions. He had two major problems before him—to subjugate and conquer the territories under the control of the Afghan noble, and to win them over to his side by accommodating them in the Mughal bureaucracy. The Afghans in general and Afghan nobles in particular were averse to any idea of acknowledging the authority of one supreme power and remaining under it. Under these circumstances, Babar decided to be guided by expediency and exigency of the situation rather than by any preconceived policy.

Babar was familiar with the position of the Afghan ruling elite but they stood divided at this juncture. It is certain that personal interests more than tribal factors were responsible for creating power and pressure groups. The Afghan nobles made constant encroachments into Bihar but they failed to establish their permanent hold over it. In fact Bihar continued to be a 'no man's land' during this period. Within this extensive area, which formed the empire of Lodi Sultans of Delhi and Agra, there were such regions or territories also which were either controlled by the independent Afghan zamindars or by Afghans or non-Afghans.

It must be said to the credit of the first two Lodi-sovereigns, Bahlol and Sikandar Lodi, that they made efforts to keep the Afghan nobles under control by either conciliating them or by eliminating the rebellious and ambitious one. In due course, new power and pressure groups came into existence. Each group began to keep their personal interests above the imperial and each began to take fullest advantage of the opportunity offered to it.

After the battle of Panipath, Babar continued inviting Afghan nobles and admitting them in the Mughal nobility. Babar declared general amnesty and assured the Afghans that they would be associated with his administration. The Afghan nobles, who had earlier defied and offered opposition, were forgiven and later taken into Mughal nobility. The submission of the Afghan nobles was of great consequence. Fath Khan besides being the son of one of the greatest Lodi amirs was well conversant with the personal hostilities and rivalries among the Afghan tribal chiefs. He also enjoyed the support of a large number of Afghans. On reaching court, he was honoured with the grant of his father's *jagir* and the high-sounding title of Khan Jahan.[9]

In between the two historic and decisive battles of Panipath and Khanwa, the political condition of northern India was so fluid that the Afghan nobles found themselves in a precarious situation. Their personal and tribal interest goaded them to change masters every

---

9. Babar, *Babar Nama, Memoirs of Babar* I (tr. A. S. Beveridge), Low Price Publication, New Delhi, 1970 (reprint), p. 537.

now and then. The expansionist designs of Rana Sanga compelled a large number of Afghan nobles to open negotiations with Babar and join the Mughals. Another prominent Afghan to surrender was Sher Khan who joined Mughal service under Junaid Barlas at Kara Manikpur. In order to prevent convergence of the Hindustani amirs (a section of which comprised of the Afghan nobles), Babar decided to keep them at a distance from one another. He was suspicious of their loyalty. Therefore, he sent Alam Khan Lodi, of Kalpi, to Gwalior to fortify it against the Rajputs. Mohammad Zaiteen was sent to Sambhal yet he could not check the desertions of the Afghans. Many Afghans turned against Babar and reoccupied some *parganas* and districts.[10]

In the post-Khanwa period the major problem, which confronted Babar, was to deal with the recalcitrant Afghan and non-Afghan nobles of the former Lodi Empire. Some Afghan nobles helped him greatly in solving this problem. In his attempt to win over the Afghans, Babar honoured them with the opportunity to entertain the royal entourage at their houses.[11]

Between 1528 and 1530, Babar does not seem to have made any attempt to absorb the Afghan nobility into the Mughals. He suspected the Afghan nobles, first because the mother of Sultan Ibrahim Lodi made an attempt to poison him and secondly, because numerous Afghan nobles of late Sultan Ibrahim Lodi had refused to give him breathing time. After the battle of Khanwa, the apprehension of Afghan nobles that Babar had not come here only to loot and plunder was confirmed. On the contrary his ambition was to uproot the Afghan power and establish his firm control over the Afghan pressure along with its pressure groups and eliminate totally the disgruntled, recalcitrant and rebellious Afghan nobles. Babar's desire to stay permanently in Hindustan had a serious repercussion on the Afghan mind. They used to observe it from two angles that in due course the Afghan nobles would be completely effaced and replaced by the Mughal nobles and secondly, the entire North-West Frontier Region would be effectively controlled from two ends, Kabul and Lahore. In these circumstances, there would remain little scope for their activities— political or otherwise, both in the North-West Frontier Region and in greater India. Prior to Babar's arrival, most of the Afghan nobles held important posts in the imperial fabric and high revenue-yielding assignments in forms of *Iqtas* or *Jagirs*. These Afghan nobles like others were an integral part of the imperial bureaucracy as well as landed aristocracy. The policy of new administration under Babar was to conciliate the old Afghan nobles as far as possible and it was necessary to eliminate the Afghan elements completely.

In order to safeguard the interests of entire Afghan community, some of the old and adventurous Afghan nobles of the previous regime decided to hold the ground firmly and make a concerted effort to drive away the Mughals from the areas which had come under their control. The first thing noticed was the regeneration of the Afghan power under its

---

10. Ibid., p. 557.

11. Ibid., p. 587.

different leaders and the beginning of the Afghan military activities from that quarter over which neither the Mughals nor the rulers of Bengal had any effective control. Most of the Afghan nobles of Sultan Ibrahim Lodi aligned themselves with Sultan Mohammad Nuhani of Bihar and these seemed to have determined to serve his cause with full loyalty. After the death of Sultan Mohammad Nuhani the leadership of the Afghan nobles was handed over to Sultan Mohammad Lodi. The Afghan nobles who were leaderless now began to arrive in Bihar to join hands with Sultan Mohammad Lodi. Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui has rightly pointed out that their sense of loyalty to the son of their master was roused.[12] There were definite reasons for it. Babar's conciliatory policy was meant for the old Afghan nobles of late Sultan Ibrahim Lodi and not for their descendents.

The assemblage of the Afghan nobles in large numbers in Bihar was no doubt a new development, but it hardly threatened Babar's interests. He knew that these Afghan nobles had divergent interests. There was tribal disunity amongst them and they were suffering from mutual jealousies and rivalries.

Up to February 1529, Sultan Mahmud Lodi and his nobles took advantage of Babar's preoccupations. The Afghan forces defeated and turned out the Mughals from the Sarkars of Lucknow, Qanauj, and Shamshabad and occupied the entire region. In 1529, Babar marched against these Afghans and recovered the lost regions. The Afghans led by Sultan Mahmud Lodi, found themselves badly scattered at the end of the Battle of Ghagra in May 1529. In 1529, Babar realized that there were very few Mughal nobles left with him and with those he could not hope to govern such a large country. Moreover, he wished to admit the Afghan nobles in large numbers in his service and utilize them in quelling the rebellion of other Afghan nobles and to promote good relations between the indigenous governing class and the Mughals which was very necessary for the stability of the Mughal Empire.

Till his death in 1530, Babar did not completely succeeded in liquidating the Afghan power in the eastern region. Bihar was still under control of the Afghan nobles. Both Sultan Mahmud Lodi and his allies and Sher Khan Sur, were making efforts to re-establish Afghan hegemony by driving away the Mughals from northern India.

Babar followed a policy of repression in order to frighten the Indians into submission to this rule and that the Indians were groaning under the Mughal invasions and considered it a calamity.[13] Indian ruling elites and the people were apprehensive of Babar's intention. The apprehension and fear was probably due to Timur's invasion which were alive in the hearts of the people. The Indian nobles were agitated at the possibility of loss of their privileged position and the masses were not sure of the intentions of the Mughal adventurer Babar. Babar was not prepared to bow before him easily. Coercion, conciliation, and diplomacy

---

12. I.H. Siddique, 'Babar's Relation with the Members of Afghan Nobility in India (1519-1530)', *Islamic Culture* II(4), 1927-28, p. 251.

13. Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui, *Mughal Relations with the Indian Ruling Elite*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1983, p. 11.

were used by Babar in dealing with the Indian elements. In this earnestness to win their cooperation Babar bestowed upon them *jagirs* and marks of honours. Though in Timurian tradition he did not believe in awarding titles to nobles yet as the Afghans loved high-sounding titles, he adopted the custom and granted titles to some of them. He even invited them to advise him on military operations.[14]

Though some of the Afghans had submitted to the Mughals, yet political opportunism led many of them to defy or betray the Mughals at important junctures. For instance, many Afghans joined Rana Sanga in the battle of Khanua. In comparison to the Hindustani amirs, the Turki amirs received a preferential treatment. Babar did not wish to risk his position by reposing all his trust in the local Afghans, who had entered his service recently. Babar pursued a conciliatory policy to win over their support. In 1530, when Babar closed his eyes, the Afghans remained in a defiant mood and, therefore, much was left to be done to pacify them and keep them in check.[15]

We do not know the exact position of the Afghan nobles in the nobility during the first ten years of Humayun's reign. Whether Humayun allowed the Afghan nobles to retain their *jagirs* or assignments, which they had received from his father, cannot be said with any amount of certainty. The statement of Gulbadan Begum reveals that Humayun was pleased to order, 'Let each keep the office, and service and lands and residence which he has and let him serve in the old way'[16] gives the impression that the Afghan nobles too must have been allowed to retain their offices and *jagirs*.

Abul Fazl mentions that in the early part of Humayun's reign, Sher Khan Sur took possession of the fort of Chunar and sent his son Abdul Rashid to wait upon the Mughal emperor. Abdul Rashid stayed at the Mughals court for some time.[17]

Humayun had committed a political blunder by relying upon the submissive attitude of Sher Khan Sur. In the political arena he found himself face to face with him, the latter deceived him, troubled him again and ultimately gave a decisive blow to the Mughal power. As regards other Afghan chiefs, Humayun suppressed the rebellion of Biban Khan and Bayazid. A large number of them fled to Gujarat and incited Bahadur Shah to plan a massive attack on the Mughal Empire. Bahadur Shah welcomed the Afghan nobles and enrolled them in his service.[18]

---

14. I.H. Siddique, *Islamic Culture* II(4), 1927-28, p. 251.

15. Muhammad Abdur Rahim, op. cit., p. 239.

16. Gulbadan Begum, *Humayun Nama, The History of Humayun* (ed. and tr. A. S. Beveridge), Oriental reprint, New Delhi, 1983 (reprint), p. 110.

17. Abul Fazal, *Akbar Nama* II (tr. H. Beveridge), Saeed International, New Delhi, 1972, p. 288.

18. Al Badauni, *Muntakhb-ut-Tawarik* I (tr. and edited by George S. A. Ranking), Idarah-I-Abadiyat-I-Delli, Delhi, 1973, p. 452.

Since Humayun's accession to the throne in AD 1530, Sher Khan continued to make well-calculated preparations to drive away the Mughals from India and revive the lost Afghan power. Those nobles, who were inclined towards sultan Mahmud, now joined him to support in his designs. Humayun decided to suppress sultan Mahmud and Sher Khan. He engaged the Afghan confederates as early as AD 1532 in the battle of Daurah. The effect of this battle was that Humayun increased dependency upon the Mughal nobility and the confirmation of his suspicion that the Afghans were not all reliable. He stopped enrolling the Afghan nobles in his army. Consequently, the Afghan nobles began to decline and reached a stage when they hardly enjoyed any influence at Mughal court. Being deprived of their power and influence, *jagirs* and posts, a large number of them must have joined Sher Khan. At the beginning of the reign, there were only five Afghan nobles in Humayun's court, viz. Khan-I-Khanan, Yusuf Khail, Jalal Khan (Son of Dariya Khan), Jalal Khan (son of Nasir Khan), Mahmud Khan Sarwani, and Sher Khan Sur. Yusuf Khail had advised Humayun not to have too much faith in his fellow-Afghan chiefs. In AD 1536, he told Humayun, it is not expedient to remain neglectful of Sher Khan as the daughter lurks there. He knows to manage the affairs of the kingdom well and that all the Afghans have collected round him.[19] In AD 1537, he again advised him to march against Sher Khan Sur but his advice went unheeded.[20] The results were far-reaching and momentous. Afterwards, this delay in opening the offensive against Sher Khan gave him an opportunity to strengthen position. In 1539, Humayun sent Dilawar Khan as Mughal ambassador to the court of Sultan Mahmud, the ruler of Bengal.[21] Later while campaigning against Sher Khan he appointed Khankhanam as his governor of Monghyr and ordered him to hold out against Sher Khan. After the Mughals had lost Bengal, Khan Khanan, Yusuf Khail also sank into oblivion. After the battle of Chausa, he was captured by Sher Khan's army.[22]

After the death of Babar in 1530, all of a sudden there was a change in the attitude of the Afghan nobles towards the imperial administration which had almost indifferent towards them. The result was that most of the Afghan nobles who had submitted to Babar deserted the Mughals and joined either Sher Khan Sur or Sultan Mahmud. In due course their numerical strength in the Mughal Empire began to decline considerably, till there remained only a few Afghan nobles who played a role in different phases of the struggle between Humayun and Sher Khan Sur, and between his brothers and other adversaries.

The second phase of his career began with his return from Persia; Humayun was assisted by some Afghans against an Afghan ruler of India, Kakar Ali Khan and Afghan

19. Abbas Khan Sarwani, *Tarikh-i-Shershahi* (tr. Brahmadeva Prasad Ambashthya), Bihar Educational Service, Patna, 1974, p. 255.

20. Ibid., p. 257.

21. Ibid., p. 2.

22. Ibid., p. 273.

nobles accompanied him to India.[23] Though Humayun received letters of invitation from India, he had to depend almost wholly upon his own resources because he was still suspicious of the conduct of the Afghans.

He had not closed his doors upon the Afghans. At the commencement of his reign in 1556, he had vowed not to inflict punishment on the Afghans or make them captives.[24] The prisoners were not only released but if any Mughal deviated from this policy, he was severely punished. The fact is that Humayun could not revive his lost faith in the loyalties of the Afghans. Nor did the Afghan nobles trust him and the Mughals. The debacles of Chausa and Kanauj were still fresh in Humayun's mind and the ambitions of the Mughal emperor and his imperialistic designs still created doubts in the Afghan chiefs. It can be said that during the second phase of Humayun's career in India (AD 1555-56), the Afghan nobles as a part of Mughal nobility did not play any significant role. The lack of trust and confidence kept both the parties at a distance. The Afghan nobles loved independence whereas, the emperor's main objective was to solicit their assistance against his internal and external foes and keep them under firm control. It was this difference in attitude which kept the two poles apart. Again, it should be pointed out that the Mughals and the Afghans belonged to two different races, and for all practical purposes, both of them were irreconcilable foes. During this phase of his career, Humayun never attempted to strengthen his ties with them or to establish personal relations with them. In fact, it was left to his successor Akbar to evolve a definite and effective policy towards the Afghan chiefs.[25]

When Akbar ascended the throne in AD 1556, the Afghan nobles of the Sur Empire were still dominant in various parts of northern India and there were many pockets of Afghan resistance. The major problem Akbar faced was not only of liquidation of the Afghan power and re-establishment of the Mughal rule, but of assimilating, if possible, the Afghan nobles and their inclusion in Mughal nobility. The two processes went hand-in-hand.

The suspicion of Akbar towards his Afghan amirs is manifest in the adoption of the policy of not assigning any important post to them in the state. They had been granted *jagirs* and were fairly spread out all over northern India, but positions of influence were not provided to them, lest they revolt and threaten the imperial hold in their jurisdiction. According to Manucci, Akbar left it as a law to his descendants that, 'The Pathans were not to be appointed governors and should only be employed as soldiers.'[26] There were two basic reasons for this attitude. First, Akbar had not forgotten the vicissitudes which his father Humayun had to face due to the crafty politics of Sher Shah. Moreover, upon his

23. Abul Fazl, *Akbar Nama-I* (tr. H. Beveridge), Saeed International, New Delhi, 1972, p. 614.

24. Ibid., p. 638.

25. Ibid., p. 618.

26. Niccolao Manucci, *Storia do Mogor, or Mogul India* I, (tr. Irvine William), Edition India, Calcutta, 1965, p. 147.

accession, his personal experience taught him that the turbulent Afghan chiefs did not feel comfortable at the Mughal court, and a few of them who had been forced by circumstances to join his service, deserted at the earliest available opportunity. Very few Afghan nobles were favoured with military appointments. Illyas Khan Afghan was the commandant of Fort of Karani in AD 1581.[27] Thus, it becomes clear that the Afghan nobles did not enjoy higher ranks either in the army or in the civil services. Out of 415 *mansabdars* of Akbar's time there were only 11 Afghans who held ranks. Abul Fazl mentions that whenever batches of Afghans arrived at court, they were pardoned and given gold and robes of honour and then released.[28] Many of them were also enlisted as Mughal retainers.

The Uzbeg rebels had secured the shelter and assistance of the eastern Afghans and Akbar had to exert himself against the rebels in order to crush them. The Afghan menace in Bengal and Orissa continued throughout his reign. On the other hand the Afghan disturbances in Gujarat thwarted the Mughal conquest of Bengal up to AD 1573. Therefore, it seems that Akbar tried to counterpoise the Afghans with Rajput elements by providing greater enrolment to Hindus especially to the Rajputs in the imperial ranks. The latter were an equally virile race and their loyalty towards their benefactor was an ·established fact. In the Mughal army, an Afghan cavalryman received a pay similar to that of the other Mughal and Indian soldiers.[29] They were given a fair treatment by the nobles under whom they were enrolled. According to Manucci, 'Akbar left it as a law to his descendants that the Pathans should never receive a higher pay than 4,000 rupees a year'.[30] This reveals that Akbar desired to maintain some sort of a financial restraint over the Afghans. The Afghan generals were also not trusted with the independent command of the Mughal army. At best they were commanders of a wing of the Mughal army.

Thus, Akbar had pursued a dual policy of repression on and conciliation towards the Afghans. Afghan leaders who wished to surrender to the Mughals were cordially treated and in many cases, granted marks of honour and *jagirs*. But these grants were mostly away from their homelands.

In the economic sphere Akbar was not prepared to grant more than necessary privileges to the Afghans. Some economic measures, undertaken by him in the beginning of the reign, indicate the suspicion of the emperor towards the Afghans. According to Badauni, the Sadar-us Sadr Shaikh Gadai cancelled the *madad-i-mash* grants held by the Khanzadas.[31] Evidently, he was referring to the Afghans because he calls them *Khans* or *khanzadas*. Afghans had always preferred that *madad-i-mash* should be granted to them in Punjab,

---

27. Al Badauni, op. cit., vol. II, (tr. W.H. Lowe) Idarah-Adabiyat-I-Delhi, Delhi, 1973, p. 297.

28. Abul Fazal, *Akbar Namah* III (tr. H. Beveridge), Saeed International, New Delhi, 1972, p. 734.

29. Ibid., p. 1032.

30. Niccolao Manucci, vol. I, p. 147.

31. Al Badauni, op. cit., vol. II, p. 23.

which was nearer to their homeland. In due course, they came to possess several assignments in Punjab. But in AD 1585 Akbar ordered the resumption of their grants. It is significant that the north-western region became a hot bed of rebellion in the same year, as such the possibility of a link between the two incidents cannot be ruled out. From the beginning of his reign Akbar had intended to break the monopoly of the Afghans over large land grants in the form of *madad-i-mash* that had come into their possession during the reign of the Sur rulers. The withdrawal of the *madad-i-rmash* grants led 'to the ruin of many of Muhamedan (Afghan) family'.[32]

Abul Fazl has mentioned that in AD 1562-63, Shaikh Abdun Nabi became the *sadr-us-sadr* of the empire. He cancelled all the grants held by the Afghans and the *Chaudaris* and referred the cases to the *shaikhs* for inquiry and confirmation of rights.[33] This differential treatment clearly reflects emperor Akbar's suspicion and fear of the Afghans. He had desired to weaken them financially so that they could not create trouble in the empire.

While the emperor took all precautions to prevent any seditious activities on the part of the Afghans, he did not deviate from his policy of forging friendly alliances with the Afghans whenever possible. Matrimonial alliances with indigenous elements were an integral part of his policy.[34] The intention behind matrimonial alliances was probably to pacify the Afghans by bringing them closer to the Mughals. It is noteworthy that while Akbar included a number of Rajputs ladies in the imperial *harem* the Afghans were conspicuous by their absence.

During Akbar's reign a deliberate attempt was made to liquidate the Afghan power completely and to give proper position to the Afghan nobles in the Mughal nobility. Such a policy was necessary for strengthening the hands of the Mughal emperor, for keeping the Afghans peaceful and contented and for maintaining peace in the North-West Frontier Region. It has been generally said that the relationship of Akbar with the Afghans was one of hostility and distrust but it was not so. Expediency and exigency of the situation continued to be the guiding factors as far as Akbar's policy towards the Afghan nobles is concerned. Emperor Jahangir too continued to maintain a similar attitude towards the Afghans, but with a slight difference. He reposed greater confidence in the Afghans and never missed an opportunity of even honouring the recalcitrant Afghans who were inclined to offer submission. He was prepared to give the Afghan nobles suitable opportunities to play significant and important roles in contemporary polities, provided they displayed loyalty and devotion. Once he was convinced about their devotion and loyalty, he never hesitated in utilizing their military prowess in the imperial campaigns which were directed against the rebels and towards the conquest of new region. This change in the attitude of the imperial

32. Abul Fazal, *Ain-I-Akbari* I (tr. H. Blochman), Aadiesh Book Depot, Delhi, 1965, p. 281.
33. Ibid., p. 281.
34. Ibid., p. 354.

power was due to the fact that by AD 1605 the process of liquidation of the Afghan power in the eastern region was almost complete as such the policy of coercion was no longer necessary. Secondly, emperor Jahangir's recent experience with the Turani and Rajput nobility prompted him to have around him a strong and powerful body of such adherents who could counteract and counterbalance the Rajputs and Turani elements of the Mughal nobility, whenever necessary. He looked towards the Afghans, famous for their valour and bravery, which could render valuable services to the state as soldiers and warriors.

A new phase of Afghan-Mughal relationship did not begin in AD 1612 but in fact it began with the accession of emperor Jahangir in AD 1605 Dilawar Khan was a very important noble at the court in AD 1605. In AD 1606, when prince Khusrau raised the banner of rebellion, Dilawar Khan was sent to pursue him and to block his passage. He displayed his worth in this campaign. A little later, he was appointed as governor of Lahore.[35]

Though emperor Jahangir was fully aware of the fact that Sultan Shah Afghan was instrumental in inciting prince Khusrau to rebel, he still continued to follow a conciliatory policy towards the Afghans. The Afghans continued to be appointed to important posts. Sher Khan was sent to take charge of Peshawar and Khyber Pass.[36] The rebellion of Prince Khusrau was supported by Afghans but Jahangir did not change his attitude towards them. Suitable ranks and posts were given to the Afghans and they continued to be appointed to the posts of governors, *faujdar* and commanders. As a safety valve the emperor did not allow the assemblage of the Afghans in one place or under one leader. He was keen to eliminate all possibilities of their rebellion or treachery. Jahangir never wanted that there should be any trouble in or near the North-West Frontier Region—the homeland of the Afghans.

The Afghan nobles played an important role on the different fronts of the Mughal Empire. One of the most important areas of the empire was the eastern region, where the hold of the Mughals in AD 1605 was quite precarious. A large number of Afghan and non-Afghan zamindars were found to be creating problems of law and order. Taking into consideration this aspect, Jahangir decided to befriend these recalcitrant Afghan chiefs and convert them into instruments of Mughal power.[37] Towards these Afghans he pursued the policy of conciliation and coercion. Those who offered submission were honoured, rewarded, enrolled in imperial service and were given suitable ranks according to their merit and status. As a result of the friendly gesture of the emperor, a large number of Afghan chiefs offered submission.

After the battle of Daulambapur in AD 1612, the last refuge of the Afghan rebels was destroyed by the Mughals. Henceforth they could neither seek shelter nor service in Bengal. Most of the Afghan zamindars and the Hindu chiefs were totally crushed and imperial

---

35. Nuruddin Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* I (tr. Alexander Rogers), Munshiram Monoharlal Publishers, Delhi, 2nd edition, 1968, p. 59.

36. Ibid., p. 208.

37. Ibid., p. 208.

control was fully established over Bengal. Under these circumstances it was rather difficult for the Afghan nobles to wade through the Mughal Empire to Afghanistan or to go to the Deccan to take up service there. The Afghans took shelter in the hills of Tripura and Assam and offered submission to the Mughals. At this stage Jahangir could have become indifferent towards them but he forgot their past and placed unreserved trust and confidence in the Afghans and continued to favour them. The Afghan nobles on their part reconciled themselves to the loss of their independence and sovereign status in the eastern region of Hindustan. Henceforth, their main aim was to create for themselves a niche in imperial politics.

The Afghan officers of Jahangir, who were posted in Bengal during 1611-12, also gave a good account of themselves. Though they were arrayed against their own brethren, yet undeterred, they opposed them valiantly and helped the other imperial officers in subduing them completely.[38]

After 1612, there was a slight change in the position of the Afghan nobles in the eastern region. Since the Afghan recalcitrant chiefs had been completely subdued, they found it difficult to create further trouble in this quarter. They fully supported Islam Khan in establishing law and order.

In 1621, Habib Khan Lodi was appointed *thanedar* of Tappar Junria in the Kuntaghat region of Brahmaputra.[39] The *Subah* of Bihar which was the *jagir* of Prince Parvez was entrusted to Sher Khan Afghan was appointed as *faujdar* of Patna. Thus, the Afghan nobles had the privilege of holding important positions in this difficult region during this period.[40]

The Afghan nobles in their region were also entrusted with diplomatic assignments. Islam Khan the governor of Bengal sent Shihab Khan Lodi to persuade Usman Khan Afghan to offer submission, accept Mughal service and *mansab* of 5,000.

The Afghan officers played equally important roles in the battle fought in the eastern region. Though generally they were not assigned independent commands, yet in some cases important assignments were given to them.

The rebellion of prince Shahjahan and his arrival in Bengal in AD 1624 on the one hand increased the importance of the Afghan nobles in the imperial service and on the other hand it gave an opportunity to some of them to take advantage of the fluid political situation and improve their fortunes.[41] In the eastern region the Afghan nobles, after their final submission to the imperialists, continued to help the latter against the rebels. Of course

---

38. Mirza Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi* I (tr. M. I. Borah), Assam Government Publication, Gauhati, 1936, pp. 179, 181.

39. Mirza Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi* II (tr. M. I. Borah), Assam Government Publication, Gauhati, 1936, p. 661.

40. Ghulam Husain, *Riyaz-us-Salatin* (tr. Abdus Salam), Bib. Ind., Calcutta, 1904, p. 196.

41. Nathan Mirza, op. cit., vol. II, p. 692.

there were certain exceptions. In such cases they cared more for their personal interests than for the imperial administration.

The patronage extended by the emperor to the Afghans encouraged Afghan migrations into Hindustan. A large number of Afghan settlements thus came into existence. It seems that in order to curb the recalcitrant Rajputs of Katehar, Jahangir encouraged Afghan settlements in that region. These measures of Jahangir clearly indicate that he had restored to the policy of checks and balances in order to maintain his authority over the heterogeneous elements at court and outside. In this instance he tried to counterbalance the two most virile elements of North India, the Afghans, and the Rajputs.

The Afghans played a peculiar role in the North-West Frontier Region during the reign of Jahangir. Despite the fact that Jahangir followed a conciliatory policy towards the Afghan nobles in India, the tribal leaders of this region did not remain completely peaceful. In AD 1617, they raised the standard of rebellion. Jahangir was extraordinary liberal towards those Afghan chiefs of the frontier region who chose to offer submission. However, as precautionary measures he preferred to detain members of their families as hostages at court. In AD 1607, a number of *Yusuf Zai* chiefs offered submission. They were all honoured and allowed to return to their country.[42] The most obvious evidence of Jahangir's pro-Afghan policy was the enrollment of a large number of Afghans in the imperial army. In the western region the role of the Afghan nobles during this period was different. Though some of them went over to the rebellious prince Shahjahan, yet a majority of them remained faithful to the crown.[43]

Despite all these, emperor Jahangir gave the Afghan nobles ample opportunities to display their worth both on the battlefields, as well as in the administration. In battle fields, they gave proof of their military skill, bravery and heroism but in administration they could not contribute much, partly because of their indifference to it and partly because they did not possess the caliber of it. They even failed to organize a solid group of their own, like Iranies and Turanies or the Rajputs. The reason was that the Afghan nobles formed a minority as compared to the other racial groups in the Mughal nobility and also because they suffered from racial jealousies.

During the reign of emperor Shahjahan there was enough scope for the Afghan nobles to play a significant role in the battlefields as well as in the administration. Soon after his accession to the throne, Shahjahan confirmed and raised the *mansabs* of many Afghan nobles.

In spite of favours shown to the Afghans by Shahjahan, one of the most powerful and influential nobles of the Mughal court, Khan Jahan Lodi betrayed the confidence of the emperor and rose in rebellion. The rebellion of Khan Jahan Lodi was a serious one for reaching consequences and implications. Shahjahan anticipated trouble in the North-West Frontier Region and he decided to suppress this rebellion at the earliest.

---

42. H. Blochman (tr.), *Ain-i-Akbari* I (translators note), p. 571.
43. Nuruddin Jahangir, op. cit., vol. I, p. 299.

Though Shahjahan wished to confine the rebellion of Khan Jahan Lodi to the Deccan itself, he could not succeed in it. Khan Jahan Lodi/Es rebellion affected Malwa and Bundelkhand as well. Besides it gave an opportunity to the tribal leaders in the North-West Frontier Region to muster support and rise in rebellion. The revolt of Khan Jahan Lodi was an event of great importance. It was one of the strongest Afghan rebellions witnessed in the recent past and its fury could have engulfed not only Shahjahan but also the Mughal Empire. Khan Jahan Lodi's rebellion changed the attitude of the imperial administration towards the Afghans for the time being but it could not ignore them in the near future. During the reign of emperor Shahjahan (AD 1627-58), a steady decline in the Afghan influence and position in the Mughal Empire is noticeable. The hostile attitude of Khan Jahan Lodi to the succession of Shahjahan, his subsequent rebellion against him were mainly responsible for growing distrust of the empire in the loyalty of the Afghans. In place of Khan Jahan, Asaf Khan and Mahabat Khan became the pioneer nobles in the empire. Even at this stage the Afghan nobles were not altogether ignored. The problems of the frontier regions of the empire, of the Deccan and the problems created by the internal rebellions demanded the services of the Afghans who were brave fighters. The expansionist designs of the Mughal emperor made it imperative to elicit the services of the Afghans in different parts of the Mughal Empire and even outside India. The Afghans continued to form an integral part of the Mughal nobility and helped it in facing the internal and external challenges.[44]

The Afghans played a significant role in the military history of the Deccan. They were engaged in the process of extension and consolidation of Mughal power in the south. They secured better appointments in the Deccan. Though they denied independent command of military campaigns and administrative responsibilities, they were entrusted with the position of *qiladars* and *jagridars* of various places.

The Afghans were favoured more with position of importance in the Deccan. There can be only two explanations for this: first, the Afghans and the Rajputs were employed to counteract an equally virile race, the Marathas, or that far away from the capital and from the North-West Frontier, the possibilities of their involvement in intrigues and rebellions were greatly reduced. However, a direct bearing of the concentration of Afghan officers in the south is visible in their attitude towards the various princes during the war of succession.[45]

Though there was a decline in the power and position of the Afghan nobility, due regard was given to the racial composition of the Mughal army. Each officer had to bring a mixed contingent. Thus, the Afghans, Rajputs, Mughals and Sayyids counterbalanced each other by equal numbers. A comparative study of *mansabs* under Shahjahan shall reveal the fact that the Afghan amirs generally held lower *mansabs* of being ranked at 1,000 or below.

44. Abdul Hamid Lahori, *Badshah Namah* I (tr. H.M. Elliot), Hafiz Press, Lahore, 1875, pp. 311-13.

45. M. Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1966, p. 97.

Khan Jahan Lodi's rebellion gave a severe blow to the position of his Afghan Kinsmen prejudiced against the Afghans due to a couple of reasons. First, many influential Afghan nobles had joined Khan Jahan Lodi in his rebellion and secondly, they had attempted to re-establish Afghan rule in India. The Pathans in general had not completely forgotten the power and prestige that had once been enjoyed by them.[46] Despite all this Aurangzeb continued to employ Afghan officers in the army and sent them to establish law and order in Afghanistan. He even made every effort to win over the Afghans by trying to convince them that after their submission, they would be treated well.

The submission of the Afghan leaders was superficial and not very lasting. They were proved harmful to the Mughals because the Afghan chieftains of the frontier region, who took up service under the Mughals, secured a first-hand experience of Mughal administration and upon rebellion they exploited this knowledge to their benefit.

Like his predecessors, Aurangzeb also remained suspicious of the Afghans. The Afghan nobles were not entrusted with high positions due to lack of trust in their fidelity. Aurangzeb skillfully harnessed Afghan energy and influence in strengthening the empire but he kept the Afghan element under his control. He neither entrusted them with independent charge of an army nor appointed them as governors of provinces, not because they were considered to be inferior to other nobles in military skill but on the ground that they lacked political acumen and administrative skill. In fact, the Mughals could never trust Afghan fidelity.

Factional politics was an integral part of the Mughal court. The Afghan element in the Mughal nobility occasionally aligned with one group or the other. At times they were suspected of instigating the royal princes to nourish wild thoughts and formulate nefarious designs. Besides their alignment with the royal princes, the Afghan nobles were thoroughly involved in the game of power politics played amongst the various groups, into which the Mughal nobility was divided. Each group made constant efforts to prevent the others from gaining importance in the empire. The alliances among the nobles were shifting in nature, depending upon their personal interest. Emperor Aurangzeb did not allow the Afghan and non-Afghan officers to mix with each other freely. He punished the Afghan nobles or transferred them on the slightest suspicion.[47]

In accordance with the policy of his predecessors, Aurangzeb encouraged matrimonial alliances with the Afghans. As a general policy, Aurangzeb used to take care of the welfare of the families of deceased Afghan officers. Aurangzeb also laid down rules for the contingents of his nobles. The Mughals who had come earlier were to enlist. Mughal soldiers to the tune of one-third of their troops while two-thirds were to belong to other races. But

---

46. Francis Bernier, *Travels in the Mughal Empire 1658-1668*, (tr. Achibold Constable) S. Chand, New Delhi (2nd edn.), 1968, p. 207.

47. Niccolao Manucci, *Storia Do Mogor*, or *Mogul India* II (tr. William Irvine) (1653- 1708), Edition India Calcutta, 1966, p. 191.

the strength of the Afghans in these contingents was not to exceed one sixth. The Afghans were allowed to maintain two-thirds of their force as Afghans and one-third from other races.[48] The Afghans thus enjoyed a distinctive privilege in the racial composition of their contingents. Aurangzeb very shrewdly counterbalanced the recruitment of Afghans by restricting their strength to one-sixth in the armies of the non-Afghan nobles. During his lifetime Aurangzeb not only kept his Afghan amirs under control, but also made them handy instruments for consolidating his power.

The distinctive characteristics of the Afghans were that despite their long associations with the Mughals they did not change their outlook. They did not change their habits and customs. Manucci has commented that the Afghans could not change themselves even when they were appointed as officers by the Mughal emperor. He states that Afghans relied more upon their tribe, and employed men of their own clan in their contingents. They were fearless and bold but 'devoid of intelligence and commonsense'.[49]

But as far as the Afghan nobles in the Mughal service were concerned, they were not as interested in rebelling and carving out independent principalities as in seeking better fortunes for themselves within the Mughal Empire, by promoting the cause of one or the other Mughal prince. It seems that it was impossible for them to regain sovereign power for their tribe in India. In fact, the growth in the number of Afghan nobles weakened the internal cohesion of the Mughal nobility which, in turn, reacted unfavourably on the fortunes of the Mughal Empire particularly when the domineering personality of Aurangzeb was removed from the scene and innumerable evils crept into the political fabric.

48. M. Athar Ali, op. cit., p. 164.

49. Niccolao Manucci, op. cit., vol. II, p. 453.

Did Calcutta Grow Industrially in the Colonial Period?

RANJIT SEN

In the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century Calcutta had an industrialized periphery. This industrialization had its roots in the Indo-British collaboration which may be called one of the greatest colonial phenomena in India. The battle of Palasi led not only to what is called the Plassey Plunder but also to an era of fruitful cooperation between the two races, the Bengali and the English, which eventually gave birth to an embryonic industrialization in lower Bengal. From the middle of the eighteenth to the middle of the nineteenth century the region around Calcutta was technologically advanced and the mercantile communities of the country composed of both the English and the natives were experimenting on new economic enterprises. In the process they were trying to build up new economic institutions in lower Bengal. On the crest of this partnership came the early rudiments of industrialization in Bengal.

Three things were important as parameters of growth. First, during the first century of the British rule in Bengal the Bengali-British business collaboration did not lose its buoyancy and the purposeful economic imperialism which was thrust on Bengal, and as a matter of fact on India, in the second half of the nineteenth century did not provide any hurdle to the initiative and enterprise of the natives. Secondly, the aggressive nationalism which criticized British failure to promote the welfare of the masses had not taken its shape till the middle of the nineteenth century. Thirdly, Calcutta had not become an economic dependency of Great Britain which she had become after the collapse of the Bengali-British business partnership in the wake of the failure of the Union Bank in 1847.

During this period the Bengali capitalists termed as *banians* were still supreme. They grew up as intermediaries between the Indian producers and their counterparts representing East India Company and emerged as the liaison between Indian enterprise and management on the one hand and foreign mercantile companies and private merchants on the other. In the pre-Palasi period *banians* were the source of credit to every European who was in need of money. A penniless European would grab a *banian's* wealth and would provide him name, influence and umbrella in return. This was how the basis of collaboration was laid. The goodwill of the European and the money of the native laid the basis of a collaboration that lasted till the middle of the nineteenth century. It was in the context of this partnership that the periphery of Calcutta was industrialized.

This industrialization, however, did not conform to that pattern which flourished in England and France in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Professor Morris D. Morris who subscribed to the view that the British rule had a beneficent influence on Indian economy was himself sceptic about the nature of industrialization in India. He admits: 'Modern industrial process did not spread easily from sector to sector and the total

effect was not cumulative. At the time of independence, India was still largely non-industrial and one of the world's poorest areas.'[1]

In the context of this the traditional view of deindustrialization surfaces itself. It says that the process of deindustrialization in Bengal started quite early in the eighteenth century and continued over some long decades in the nineteenth. 'For example, by the end of the eighteenth century the relatively advanced iron-smelting industry of Birbhum—advanced in comparison to the tribal household industry of the Agarias of south Bihar—was wiped out by imported iron.'[2] Cotton Industry in Bengal faced the greatest blow of deindustrialization during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. By the turn of the eighteenth century 'many branches of cotton hand-looming were facing a decline. Following the introduction of what has been characterized as 'one-way free decline' in 1813 and the large-scale carrying of British manufactures to the market of the colony, the process was widened and quickened. By 1832 the cotton handloom industry, particularly the specialized weaving crafts localized in the major urban centres of Bengal, was in a state of serious crisis and the cotton-spinning industry was facing a situation of near extinction.'[3] N.K. Sinha says that by the end of the third decade of the nineteenth century nearly one million people in Bengal were thrown out of employment.[4] These were great setbacks which created a milieu in which other indigenous industries began to suffer. Silk, sugar, salt, and indigo declined or stagnated.[5]

If this picture of deindustrialization was absolute, urbanization then had no chance of a takeoff. Yet urbanization, we know, was slowly taking place in Calcutta from the second half of the eighteenth century. Maurice Dobb writes: 'So far as the growth of the market exercised a disintegrating influence on the structure of feudalism, and prepared the soil for

1. Morris D. Morris, 'The Growth of Large-Scale Industry to 1947', Dharma Kumar (ed.), *The Cambridge Economic History of India* II : 553, Indian edn., 1984.

2. Ranajit Dasgupta, 'Industrial Change in Colonial Bengal', Professor Adhir Chakravarty (ed.), *Aspects of Socio-Economic Changes and Political Awakening in Bengal from the Eighteenth Century to Independence*, State Archives of West Bengal, Education Department, Government of West Bengal, Calcutta, 1989, p. 64.

3. Ibid.

4. N.K. Sinha, *Economic History of Bengal* 3: 7.

5. For details in the debate on deindustrialization reference may be made to the following works: (i) Irfan Habib, 'Potentialities of Capitalist Developments in the Economy of Mughal India', *Enquiry*, New Series III (3), 1971; (ii) V. I. Pavlov, *The Indian Capitalist Class*, pp. 41-2 and *Historical Premises for India's Development*; (iii) A. I. Chicherov, *Economic Development In the 16th-18th Century*, p. 238; (iv) Rajani Palme Dutt, *India Today*, pp. 95-6; (v) M.N. Roy, *India in Transition*, p. 90; (Paul Baran, *Political Economy of Growth*, pp. 179-80; (vi) A.R. Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, p. 16; (vii) Saibal Gupta, 'Potentialities of Industrial Revolution of British India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, March 1, 1980; (viii) Harasankar Bhattacharya, *Aspects of Indian Economic History*, Progressive Publishers, Calcutta, 1980, pp. 175-80.

the growth of forces which were to weaken and supplant it, the story of this influence can largely be identified with the rise of towns as corporate bodies.'[6] Viewing in this context one may say that the growth of Calcutta as a town in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was because of the growth of commerce and the development of markets within and outside it that were operating with relentless force on the feudal economy of Bengal's interior. In India in the past towns emerged occasionally from ports here and there but mainly from three major processes. First, they were centres of pilgrimage or sacred places of some sort like Allahabad, Benares, Gaya, Puri, Nasik, Amritsar, etc.; secondly, they were the seats of administration, narrowly of courts and broadly of governments like Delhi, Lahore, Lucknow, Poona, Arcot, Tanjore, etc.; and finally, they were the commercial centres owing their existence to their positions along trade routes either on the river or on land, like Mirzapur, Hooghly, Bangalore, Hubli and the like. Jadunath Sarkar gives us another insight about the emergence of towns. He says:

> 'In India cities were created in the past either by the royal residence or the special religious sanctity of a place. Wherever our Muhammedan sovereign or their provincial viceroys lived, cities sprang up. In a few years the tents were replaced by houses and when later on a defensive wall was added, it became complete city. Here all the best artisans of the land were concentrated, and here most part of the revenue was spent. Again, the Indian manufacturer of old never thought of going out to seek his customers, he expected them to come to his doors. Hence, every famous centre of pilgrimage, such as Benares, Puri, Kanchi, or Mathura by drawing tens of thousands of visitors every year afforded an excellent market and induced artisans to settle there. In time, the temple became the centre of a large and flourishing city.'[7]

From the account given above it appears that in most cases the origin of Indian towns was non-industrial in character. Calcutta fell in line with this tradition. It was created as a garrison city, turned eventually into a commercial centre and a port and finally developed into a seat of administration. Industry did not play any significant role in making of the town till the inception of jute industry in Bengal. The urge for industry became apparent in the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1869, Chandranath Bose called for protective tariffs as a measure to encourage the development of indigenous industries. The demand was repeated by Bholanath Chandra in 1873. This was the result of a middle class discontent which eventually led to economic nationalism in Bengal. Historians say that economic nationalism did not manifest in Bengal until the 1880s.[8] But truly speaking it started long ago when the Bengali intelligentsia began to express concern for the miseries of the Bengal ryots from the middle of the nineteenth century. The collapse of the indigo industry in the 1830s and 1840s, the fall of the Union Bank in 1847, the mutiny-scare of 1857-58 and the indigo revolt

---

6. Maurice Dobb, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*, p. 70.

7. Jadunath Sarkar, *Economics of British India*, p. 83.

8. Blair B. Kling, 'Economic Foundations of the Bengal Renaissance', Rachel Van M. Baumer (ed.), *Aspects of Bengali History and Society*, New Delhi, 1976, p. 27.

of 1860 kept the Bengali mind away from any thought of industry in and around Calcutta. The national demand for industry manifested steadily in the second half of the nineteenth century.[9] But such demand was more articulated from Bombay than from Calcutta. Bombay nationalists, starting from Dadabhai Naoroji to Ranade had a better understanding of the problems of capital and industry in the country. Ranade wrote: 'Just as the Land in India thirsts for water, so the industry of the Country is parched up for want of capital.'[10] In the absence of capital, not only industry but also urbanization and the promotion of life in India also suffered. From the 1850s foreign capital had come to be invested India. In Calcutta there was a sharp division of opinion as to whether foreign capital was welcome to the Indians. Satish Chandra Mukherjee, editor of the very popular journal *The Dawn* from Calcutta opposed to foreign capital investment and large-scale capitalistic industry in the country[11] whereas The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* clearly stated that in the existing circumstances it would be suicidal and foolish to oppose the influx of foreign capital into the country.'[12] Bipin Chandra Pal was opposed to foreign investment in the country and in this he lined up with Satish Chandra Mukherjee. He summed up his position thus:

> 'The introduction of foreign, and mostly British, capital for working out the natural resources of the country, instead of being a help, is, in fact, the greatest of hindrances to all real improvements in the economic condition of the people. This exploitation of the land by foreign capitalists threatens to involve both Government and people in a common ruin... It is as much a political, as it is an economic danger. And the future of New India absolutely depends upon an early and radical remedy of this two-edged evil.'[13]

The result of all this was that Calcutta remained bereft of industry in comparison with Bombay and Poona till the coming of the Swadeshi days. As a matter of fact Calcutta in the second half of the nineteenth century did not see an industrial boom because Bengal leaders here were not as keen as those of western India to grow their own industry.[14] The atmosphere of industry, therefore, grew in rapid pace in Bombay and Poona rather than in

---

9. 'Thus, by the end of the 19th century, the demand for rapid industrialization of the country along modern lines had assumed national proportions.'—Bipan Chandra, *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India: Economic Policies of Indian National Leadership, 1880-1905*, New Delhi, 1966, p. 69.

10. M.G. Ranade, *Essays on Indian Economics,* Bombay, 1898, p. 92.

11. In this he becomes the forerunner of Gandhi in opposing modern industry.

12. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 23 February 1903.

13. Bipin Chandra Pal, *New India*, 12 August 1901. In the next issue of *New India* he continued the campaign: 'Under existing economic and financial conditions', he said, "we are constrained to look upon every new industry opened by English enterprise and worked by British capital, as a source of fresh economic danger." *New India*, 19 August 1901.

14. About the early nationalist pioneers of industry in Bombay see A.C. Mazumdar, *Indian National Evolution*, Madras, 1917.

Calcutta. In western India the nationalist leaders themselves were pioneers in entrepreneurship[15] and as a result indigenous capital formation, however weak, was taking shape there and the cotton industry of the Bombay Presidency was perhaps the only major industry in India about this time which grew with indigenous capital. Ranade was one great spokesman for industrialization in Bombay. Gokhale said, the 'most of the industrial and commercial undertakings that have sprung up in Poona during the last twenty years owe a great deal to his inspiration, advice, or assistance.'[16] This type of a source for industrial inspiration was absent in Bengal in the second half of the nineteenth century. Bengal always lagged behind the Bombay Presidency in terms of the growth of industry and Calcutta shared this industrial backwardness of its hinterland so as to compare itself with Bombay. One example will suffice to prove our contention. In 1879, Bipan Chandra observes, 'there were in India only 56 cotton mills employing nearly 43,000 persons. Nearly 75 per cent of these mills were situated in the Bombay Presidency. In 1882, there were just 20 jute mills, most of them in Bengal, employing nearly 20,000 persons.'[17] Thus, on a comparative scale Bengal suffered and Calcutta also suffered in the process. One reason why Bengal's indigenous industry did not grow was that the Bengali capitalists who used to stay mostly in Calcutta were shattered after the collapse of the Union Bank and the capital of Bengal

---

15. Speaking about the early entrepreneurial enterprise of the nationalist leaders Bipan Chandra writes: "They [the nationalist leaders] were among the early pioneers of the movement for starting modern industries, banks, insurance companies, trading houses, etc. For example, in 1855 Dadabhai Naoraji became a partner in the commercial firm of the Camas, the first Indian firm to be established in London, and in 1869 he started his own concern under the name Dadabhai Naoraji and Co. Ranade played an important part in the origin and growth of the Cotton and Silk Spinning and Weaving Factory, the metal manufacturing Factory, the Poona Mercantile Bank, the Poona Dyeing Company, and the Reay Paper Mill, all set up at Poona... K.T. Telang and Pherozeshah Mehta, along with some others 'who were keen in our new-born enthusiasm to promote industries and arts of India', started a soap factory in Bombay in the 1970's. As a matter of fact, Pherozeshah Mehta was quite intimately connected with the mill industry of India. Tilak also ventured into the industrial field, though only for a short while, when in 1891 he opened in partnership with two friends a cotton-ginning factory at Latur in the Nizam's territory. D.E. Wacha was the managing agent of the large and flourishing Morarji Gokaldas and Sholapur Mills; and for many years he was a member of the managing committee of the Bombay Mill Owners' association. R.N. Mudholkar, one of the prominent Congress leaders of the 19th century, was also one of the forerunners of modern trade and industry in Berar. In 1881-82, he established in cooperation with some friends the Berar Trading Company, which was the first joint-stock company in Berar, and acted as its secretary. Later in 1885, he started along with others the first textile mill in Berar. He was also instrumental in the setting up of an oil pressing factory and several cotton ginning and pressing factories." Bipan Chandra, op. cit., p. 86.

16. Gopal Krishna Gokhale, *Speeches*, published by G.A. Natesan, Madras. 1916, p. 927.

17. Bipan Chandra, op. cit., p. 71.

became reluctant for industrial investment.[18] Henceforth the treasure of the Bengali merchants and capitalists was invested in land and that too in Calcutta and not in industry.[19] With the passing away of men like Ramdulal De, Dwarkanath Tagore and Motilal Seal, the age of the Bengali capitalists and entrepreneurs was over. With the eclipse of the Bengali *banians* there was no moneyed class in Bengal who could compete with the English in equal terms. Once in its history—during the first century of the British rule—Calcutta grew both as a centre of power of the British rule and also as the centre of the Bengali capitalists who had the mind-set to go into industry. On the fall of this class in the middle of the nineteenth century Calcutta became the field of two divergent trends of developments, first, the economic nationalism born of middle-class discontent and the second, a very profound cultural nationalism. The two genres eventually mingled into one broad trend of political nationalism in the country and Calcutta became epicenter of all nationalist tremours in the country. The attitude of collaboration and cooperation which the Bengalis maintained during the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century changed into a kind of xenophobia[20] because of the imperial impingement on the Bengali business enterprise.[21] The change of attitude was thus noted by Warren Gunderson: 'by the 1870s... new cultural patterns were emerging which were more assertive and more aggressively national.... In the new age men appeared on the stage that were much more skeptical about the value of cooperation with the British.'[22] The collapse of the world of capital, capitalists and institutions of capital like the agency houses was complete by the middle of the nineteenth century. Till then Calcutta had some chances of a sovereign industrial growth without remaining anyway dependent on the empire and the world capitalism. Calcutta was not linked to world capitalism till the beginning of the nineteen fifties. 'The coming of railways,' Bipan Chandra observed, 'heralded the entry of modern machines in India, and during the 1850's cotton textile, jute, and coal mining industries were started in India. As the latter two fields were primarily the preserve of European Capital, Indian enterprise and hopes rested mainly on cotton textile industry, which has from its very inception

---

18. On this point reference may be made to N.K. Sinha, *The Economic History of Bengal* III, 1783-1848, Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1970, chapters 6 & 7.

19. To what extent the Bengal capital was consumed in building up real estates may be known from Pradip Sinha, *Calcutta in Urban History,* Firma KLM Private Ltd., Calcutta, 1978, Appendix III, pp. 141-59.

20. David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance,* Berkeley, University of California Press, 1969, pp. 208-234.

21. For the detail of it see N.K. Sinha, op. cit., chapter 7.

22. Warren Gunderson, 'The Self-Image and World-View of the Bengali Intelligentsia as Found in the Writings of the Mid-Nineteenth Century, 1830-1870' in *Bengal Literature and History* ed. Edward C. Dimock, East Lansing, Asian Studies Centre, Michigan State University, 1967, p. 146.

occupied the position of being the most important factory industry of the country.'[23] This sort of industrial thrust was not there in Bengal so that the atmosphere of industrialization did not permeate in the making of this capital city in Calcutta. Calcutta could go industrial only with the inception of jute but hitherto the initiative was in the hands of the foreigners so that the jute factories came to be situated along the bank of the Ganges in the interior suburbs of Calcutta. The city housed only the city offices of the factories thus keeping the ambience of the city mostly free of the spirit of industry.

Blair Kling in a remarkable essay[24] shows how in the first century of the British rule in Bengal the genius of the indigenous people had created the nucleus of a sovereign industrial growth in the country. Calcutta was then witnessing a new industrial revolution but it was not allowed to mature into fulfillment. The step through which this growth was effected has been summed up below.

The first step towards this industrialization was collaboration between the English and the Bengali intelligentsia. 'The dominant literary theme of the first half of the nineteenth century,' writes Kling, 'expressed by such diverse writers as Rammohun Roy, Bhabani-charan Banerjee and radical students of young Bengal, was Indo-British collaboration. They wrote in a period of economic cooperation between the races, a time of *embryonic industrialization in Lower Bengal* when the area was technologically advanced and when the mercantile community, composed of both races, was attempting to establish independent economic institutions.'[25] [Italics ours]

This collaboration developed on two wheels—one was the partnership in trade and the other was a partnership in capital. The traditional Bengali merchants surrendered their command over the inland and coastal trade to the Pathan, Punjabi and Marwari traders of north India early in the seventeenth century. In the eighteenth century it was the English traders who, because of their takeover of *dastaks*, political authority and arms wrested this control from the upcountry merchants. With the Bengalis by their sides the up-coming English traders found no difficulty to organize their Bengali partners as their manpower support for their newly conquered trade. These men of collaboration were mostly Calcutta-based operators and through them the city became the rendezvous where the two races built their early commercial bonds. Out of these bonds emerged the ways and means to

---

23. Bipan Chandra, op. cit., p. 71.

24. Blair Kling, op. cit., p. 26-42.

25. Blair Kling, op. cit., p. 27.

explore the interior.[26] The Bengalis were not lifted to their original status of predominating coastal and inland traders of silk and textile but they were now seated as adjuncts to the global British trading system. Calcutta thus got a status uplift being linked to the world capitalist system that was slowly spreading its tentacles to the east. The Bengalis in the seventeenth century lost their control over trade to the outsiders—the upcountry merchants —and now they were reinstated in their control over the same business only as politically subordinate but financially equal partners of another set of outsiders with whom they shared a common territorial base located in Calcutta. This point is normally missed by historians that in the rise of Calcutta this command over the coastal trade gave the city a corresponding control over a wide range of hinterland which eventually helped her port to grow and sustain itself as an effective outlet for the cargoes of the orient.[27]

The financial partnership of the Bengali traders with the British merchants—the private traders of the eighteenth and the free traders of the nineteenth century—was effected through the channel of the *banian*s. By the middle of the eighteenth-century Calcutta had moved ahead in the accumulation of wealth and the Bengali middlemen acting as intermediaries between the foreign East India Companies and the primary producers of the interior accumulated great wealth. It was this wealth which was invested in bringing about an industrial regeneration in the country. The *banians* had knowledge of the production centres of the interior, had their own links with them and had their own accumulated capital. Knowledge, knowhow and wealth were the strength on the basis of which they had acquired a kind of distinction of their own and their primacy in all partnership with the foreigners. Thus, the *banians* had grown up with the Company as the most potential class that was capable of generating capital in the economy and make it available to the British traders.[28] On the basis of this strength of capital in the society

---

26. 'The Modern Bengali business class, in fact, owes its origin to British commercial activity. When Europeans began trading in Bengal in the sixteenth century, the traditional Bengali merchant castes had been displaced by traders from north India who had captured the lucrative foreign trade in Bengali silk and cotton textiles. It was from these outsiders—Marwaris, Pathans, Kashmiris, and others—and not from Bengalis that the British seized the trade of Bengal in the eighteenth century. Greater resources and the use of the *dastak* enabled the British to outbid the merchants of north India for the production of Bengal. In addition, wherever possible the British bypassed the middlemen and gathered handloom weavers and silk winders into compounds under their own control. They also diverted the extensive coastal trade between Bengal and Gujarat from the boats of independent Indian merchants to their own ships and changed the direction of the flourishing trade between these provinces to a separate trade of each with the Far East.' —Blair Kling, op. cit., p. 27.

27. For further details on these points see N.K. Sinha, op. cit.; Sukumar Bhattacharya, *The East India Company and the Economy of Bengal 1704-1740,* London, 1954; and Holdern Furber, *John Company at Work,* Cambridge, Mss, Harvard University Press, 1948.

28. Blair Kling, op. cit., p. 29.

a strong willforce for an industrial takeoff developed. Whatever industrial development took place around Calcutta in the first century of British rule in the country grew out of this willforce.

Blair Kling points out that until the middle of the nineteenth century Calcutta witnessed the growth of some industry and advanced technology around it.[29] The largest single industrial complex, he notes, grew at a place called Fort Gloster, fifteen miles south of Calcutta.[30] 'The complex included', he writes, 'a factory for making cotton twist, a rum distillery, an iron foundry, an oil-seed mill, and a paper mill, all worked by five steam engines. The cotton mill, set up in 1817, was the oldest in India.'[31] Considering the context of the time this did not seem to be a mean industrial beginning for Calcutta—a town which itself was in the process of growth. Till 1833 the cotton mill worked very well. It worked with two engines of fifty horse power each and produced a large quantity of cotton twist. According to a contemporary report the twist raised from the mill, 'was daily rising in the estimation of the natives...'[32] By contemporary scale the labour employment was great. The same record notes: '...the labour of men initiated in the art of weaving is now almost double of what was performed at the commencement of the undertaking.'[33] Most of the industries in and around Calcutta flourished till the thirties of the nineteenth century. In this decade there was a crisis in the capital market of Calcutta. The agency houses fell one by one and even the indigo industry came to be starved of finance. The Fort Gloster could not escape unhurt from this blow. Kling observes: 'After Fegusson and Company, its owner, went bankrupt in 1833; the Fort Gloster complex was purchased by a joint-stock company most of whose shareholders were old India hands resident in England.'[34] The Fort Gloster complex grew out of Bengali and British investments built in collaboration. The leading Bengali entrepreneurs of the time Dwarkanath Tagore[35] and others were some of the top investors in making of the complex. 'By 1840 the mill was producing 700,000 pounds of yarn annually, the lower numbers of which were sold in Calcutta better than imported yarn and the larger numbers on a par with imports. The labour force, with the exception of European superintendent, was recruited from Orissa and Bengal, paid by the task, and worked eleven hours a day.'[36] This, one would say, was a competent nucleus for industry

---

29. Blair B. Kling, op. cit., p. 38.

30. Blair B. Kling, op. cit., p. 30.

31. Ibid.

32. *Asiatic Journal*, vol. 13, January 1834, p. 6, cited in Blair Kling, op. cit., p. 30.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid. Dwarkanath Tagore, the Bengali colossus of the time, was one of the major shareholders of the complex.

35. Dwarkanath Tagore's holdings have been referred to in *Bengal Harkaru*, 22 May 1848 and 27 March 1852.

36. Blair B. Kling, op. cit., p. 30.

in Bengal much in the heart of a colonial economy that certainly did not favour any sign of native competition to those in England. With weavers settled in Calcutta around modern Simla and other regions and yarn being produced in Fort Gloster and also with the Burra Bazaar as one of the major centres in the distribution network of the time Calcutta developed the potentiality of a textile industry comparable to that of Dhaka in the early colonial years.[37] The territory of Calcutta was never used as a favoured site of industries. But in the areas around, particularly in the right bank of the Ganges some kind of industrial units were coming up, sometimes in clusters and sometimes individually, in the first half of the nineteenth century.[38] Three things promoted industry in Bengal at that time—the capital of the *banians*, the surplus wealth of the British traders, soldiers and officers and the power of the steam. Steam navigation made movement of men and commodity easy and created the ambience for industry.[39] The wind of change for industry started blowing long before the British capital began to flow in from the fifties of the nineteenth century. The Bengali entrepreneurial efforts on the Indian side adequately matched the British enterprise to create the nucleus of an industrial revolution in Bengal. This revolution certainly had not assumed a formidable shape but its early beginnings were made so much so that the city of Calcutta was bubbling with the spirit of innovative enterprises in places not far off from her core. The select place of this industry was certainly on the right bank of the Ganges but its radiations touched the city in the most effective ways. For example the labour force was drawn from Orissa, Bihar and the interior of the districts around Calcutta. Even the Eurasian and the Chinese settlements were also used as the centres from where effective workmen could be drawn. In the eighteenth century a vast sprawling area called the *cooly bazaar* maintained its obstinate existence near the new Fort William in Calcutta. From whatever places the labour forces were drawn the common spot for rallying them was Calcutta from where they were distributed to their required centres. With the manpower base being effectively built in the city proper the right bank of the Ganges was assured of its labour supply and industry could flourish. Adjacent to Calcutta sites for an industrial revolution thus grew up in the first hundred years of the British rule in India. It synchronized with urbanization but its pace was rapid. In a small and defined space it was almost a clustered growth. Here we have a glimpse from Kling:

'Before the middle of the nineteenth century manufacturing activity had spread northward along the right bank of the Hugli River into the suburbs of Hugli, Howrah, Sibpur

37. For further information of capitalist enterprise in India see Great Britain, House of Commons *Parliamentary Papers*, 1840, vol. 8, Select Committee on East India Produce, Testimony of Henry Gouger, pp. 116-23.

38. See 'Notes on the Right bank of the Hooghly', *Calcutta Review*, vol. 6, July-December 1845.

39. G.A. Princep, *An Account of Steam Vessels and of Proceedings Connected with Steam Navigation in British India*, Calcutta 1830 and Henry T. Bernstein, *Steamboats on the Ganges*, Calcutta, 1960.

and Sulkea, called by one writer "the Southwark of Calcutta".[40] Included were sugar factories, rum distilleries, cotton screws, a biscuit factory, flour mills, a mustard oil mill, and a paper factory. In and near Calcutta itself were a number of steam-operated iron factories; Jessop and Company, established in the eighteenth century, repaired steamboats, manufactured tools and simple machinery, and in 1825 offered to build a railway from Calcutta to Diamond Harbour. The government itself operated the most expensive foundry. From a modern plant opened in 1834 at Cossipore, four miles north of Calcutta, the foundry supplied brass ordnance to the whole of India. The court of directors had sent out twelve boring and turning lathes, some lighter lathes and two small steam engines to power the works. Adjacent to the foundry was a casting and smelting house with cupola blast furnaces for smelting iron and large reverberatory furnaces for smelting gun metal.'[41]

This periphery of industry was important in view of the colonial character of the city. The industries noted above certainly do not represent a broad factory-system of the type we had in England in the contemporary times. This was not possible in Calcutta because of two reasons. First, anchoring on the port the city was made mostly as a commercial centre for the British Asiatic trade where a garrison-based town could eventually coordinate the growth of the British Empire in Asia. Secondly, an economy ripped of its ancient indigenous industrial parameters and subordinated to the determination of a foreign economy could not produce a revolution of the scale comparable to the industrial revolution in England. A colonial economy thrust its direction to production of raw materials and whatever industry we had here during the period of our study was an appendage to it. Given this the question arises as to what promoted these rudiments of industry to come to the surface and provide an illusion of growth. Was it only because of the capital available from the society or was there any need of the Empire itself? The capital was certainly one factor and the need of the city was the other which inspired men of knowledge and capital to undertake entrepreneurial efforts. Along with this and not overriding them was a third factor, namely the availability of cheap labour.

'A large, docile, and talented labour force', writes Blair Kling, 'was available to operate the factories and mills. The leading employer was the Government Steam Department, which hired Indian and Eurasian labour as mechanics, shipwrights, millwrights, plumbers, and boilermakers. Elsewhere in the city skilled workmen, recruited from Hindu artisan castes and from the Chinese community, worked as carpenters, painters, blacksmiths, locksmiths and jewellers, some under European master craftsman. Workmen were hired in gangs under contract with a chief *mistry*, an Indian master craftsman who received the wages from the entire gang and distributed them as he wished. Although there were mixed reports on the quality of Indian labour, those employed in the mint were said to handle the

40. The expression is available in 'Notes on the right Bank of the Hooghly', etc.

41. Blair B. Kling, op. cit., pp. 30-1.

machinery including the steam engine, with facility. Similarly, the workmen at the Fort Gloster cotton mill were considered experts in their machinery duties.'[42]

As the spirit of industry gathered momentum industrial acumen slowly emerged among the citizens of Calcutta. The Bengali *banians*, traders, merchants and all collaborators with the various East India Companies had acquired entrepreneurial efficiency long before. Training of labour through apprenticeship was not common but it did not affect labour productivity. Two factors account for this. First, some segments of labour were already skilled in their work. The Chinese carpenters, for example, were known for their efficiency which they acquired as the characteristic proficiency of their race. Bengali weavers had been adept in their work for generations. All they needed was an acquaintance with the machines in the cotton mills which they did in no time being under European supervisors—hard taskmasters who were efficient in grooming labour. This European supervision was the second factor that saved labour from dissipation. Normally, the workforce was drawn from agriculture and they were seasonally employed in industry. Labour ghettoes had not surfaced around factories because an organized labour class had not grown up yet. The industrial growth was thus, small in all sense but Blair Kling says, it was powerful and potential with the blast of a revolution. The whole process— deployment of capital, labour and enterprise—was manoeuvered from Calcutta. In this sense it was a pride of the city.

'In terms of total production of Bengal', writes Kling, this industrial activity was probably not of great significance. Its importance, instead, must have been in its effect on the intellectual and moral climate of the city, in awakening a pride of citizenship. Calcutta appeared to be moving inexorably toward industrialization, and a sense of progress pervaded the city. Indian participation in the modern sector of the economy was on an upward trend, and the Bengali elite must have participated in the prevailing pride of citizenship and sense of progress.'[43]

This picture of Calcutta's industrialization was essentially a phenomenon of the first half of the nineteenth century. For the second half the picture was one of lost advantage in industry. Calcutta, in official records, was presented as a city of business marked only by buying and selling of wares produced outside the city and the city was earmarked as a place where manufacture was absent. It means that the most significant determinant of the growth of a city in the nineteenth century—rapid industrialization—was denied to Calcutta.[44]

---

42. Blair B. Kling, op. cit., p. 31.

43. Ibid.

44. It has been stated in a recent research, that 'the most crucial determinant in the growth of cities in the nineteenth century—rapid industrialization—was a feature notably absent in Calcutta. If anything, growth of the factory industry was positively discouraged in India by the British.'— Partho Datta, *Planning the City Urbanization and Reform in Calcutta c. 1800-c. 1940*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2012, p. 129.

Before the inception of jute as a full-grown industry in the twentieth century[45] factory-system was never encouraged by the British in India. The fear was that lest Indian industry should compete with the British industries that had grown up in course of the last two centuries in England. Calcutta was one city in the second half of the nineteenth century which thus suffered industrial atrophy to a great extent.[46] Labour was abundant[47] and Indian capital and enterprises were not absent. But the British capital had started coming in after the collapse of the Indian business world in Bengal in the 1840s[48] and in the vacuum following this collapse British managing agency system had established its hold on the economy of the country. In the face of this imperial encroachment Indian capital began to fight shy. One reason why Bengali capitalists became reluctant of investing their wealth in business was that they were cheated by their European and other foreign partners and since crossing the oceans was social taboo to them they could not undertake overseas journey and had to depend upon their non-Indian partners in businesses that required overseas transactions.[49]

---

45. 'The jute industry that grew around Calcutta in the late nineteenth century was firmly in the hands of the British managing agency houses and contributed little to Indian industrial growth.' —Ibid.

46. This point has been excellently analysed in Atiya Habib Kidwai, 'Urban Atrophy in Colonial India: Some Demographic Indicators', Indu Banga (ed.), *The City in Indian History*, Delhi, Manohar, 1991. The driving away of native capital from industry, the unequal completion of the English in all industrial ventures from the beginning and the lost opportunities for Indian enterprise created an economy of no outlet for forward-looking and enterprising Indians. The university age had created new education and a new middleclass in Bengal who had great aspirations for participation in business, administration and industry. They were choked in the bottlenecks created by the imperial administrative and industrial policy. Out of the middleclass discontent Indian nationalism grew. It should be noted that no industry grew within the jurisdiction of the municipality of the city of Calcutta. Partho Datta comments: 'Besides, strictly speaking, this phenomenon (growth of industry) was outside the jurisdiction of the municipality of Calcutta city.' —Partho Datta, op. cit., p. 129.

47. For further information on this point see Ranajit Dasgupta, 'Poverty and Protest: A Study of Calcutta's Working-Class and Labouring Poor 1875-1900', A. Das, V. Nilkanth and P.S. Dubey (eds.), *The Worker and the Working Class*, Delhi, Public Enterprises Centre for Continuing Education, 1984 and Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'On Deifying and Defying Authority: Managers and Workers in the Jute Mills of Bengal, c.1890-1940', *Past and Present*, No. 100, 1983.

48. For the failure of the Indian business enterprise see see N. K. Sinha, *The Economic History of Bengal 1793-1848*, Vol. III, Calcutta 1970 Ch. VII under the title *Indian Business Enterprise: Its Failure in Calcutta* (1800-1848).

49. 'There are many case records in the Supreme Court archives which prove that the Bengal exporters of opium to the Far East could be cheated with impunity. The most conspicuous case was that of the sons of Gopey Mohan Tagore against the Barrettos. Chundercoomer Tagore and his brothers were duped and cheated in a single transaction to the extent of five lakhs. The Bengal traders could not trust their agents in Macao or Canton whose shifts, subterfuges, pretences and contrivances they could not circumvent.' —N.K. Sinha, op. cit., pp. 107-8.

N. K. Sinha believes that the shock of being duped acted as a brake on their enterprise in business and industry. This collapse of the Indian business world was a phenomenon of the middle of the nineteenth century. With their collapse the nucleus of industry that was steadily taking shape in Calcutta and around withered.

The reflection of this collapse came in the 1881-Census which highlighted Calcutta as a city of no industry. It noted: 'certain industries have been introduced of late years, but the few cotton and jute mills that have been erected are mostly situated outside the limits of the Town and Suburbs'. The industrial vacuum of the city was thus, writ large in the 1881-Census report. 'Calcutta', the report goes on, was 'essentially a commercial city and not a manufacturing centre. Of the 327,343 male persons having stated occupations... it may be said that more than one-half are engaged in commercial pursuits, and that the rest are employed in administering their wants... [T]he industrial class...consists for the most part of persons who are supplying the wants of their fellow—townsmen—carpenters, bricklayers, thatchers, barbers, tailors, shoemakers, washermen, water carriers, and the like. Of manufacturers either for export to foreign countries or for distribution in the interior, we see very few traces. The trade of Calcutta is one of buying and selling raw produce or goods manufactured elsewhere, a trade of exchanging the products of other countries or places, and not a trade of production. This fact is not a new discovery, but it is sometimes forgotten when persons institute comparisons between Calcutta and manufacturing cities of Western Europe.'[50]

The absence of industries was a tragic phenomenon in the history of Calcutta. What is significant is that there was no city adjacent to Calcutta which could grow as an industrial town in the nineteenth century just the way Glasgow grew along with Edinburgh.[51]

---

50. Baverly, *Census* 1881, 22, 46.

51. In a seminar held in Calcutta in 1981 Barun De, the historian, made the following observation: 'I was trying to think of cities which have been healthy, which have maintained themselves, which have retained a vitality which is not colonial, and which have not has an industrial core. Immediately, two cities sprung to my mind, which did not have an industrial core at any rate: Edinburgh and New York.'

    'Edinburgh is not only the political capital of Scotland; it is also its cultural capital. It was a city built around a rock with a castle on it. And sects of squabbling Presbyterian divines, on that narrow street which comes down from the rock, by their own process of interaction, bred what was known as the great the great intellectual renaissance of the eighteenth century in Scotland. The industry grew up about 60 miles away, in Glasgow, in Pailey, in Ayr, and such places. That was after imperial exploitation fructified, when there was an integral relationship between Edinburgh and Glasgow.'

    'New York...did not have an industrial core, it had an industrial periphery. It was a Dutch mercantile colonial city which then became a British neo-colonial mercantile city that is to say in the period from the Declaration of Independence till about the 1860s. Round its periphery developed working industrial units on the New Jersey shore and north of Long Island. The point here, I think, is that cities which are able to maintain a productive relationship with the

Historians strongly feel that Calcutta in the colonial period could not build an industrial core. Nor could it build even an industrial periphery which could promote its own urbanization.[52] Industrialization in the west was the most creative force behind formation of cities. Mumford, while discussing the process of urbanization in the West, generalizes a pattern of transformation that came in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. He said that 'if capitalism tended to expand the province of the market-place and turn every part of the city into a negotiable commodity, the change from organized urban handicraft to large-scale factory production transformed the industrial towns...' He argued that in the coke-towns,[53] the generating forces were the mine, the factory, the railroad, etc. 'In greater or lesser degree', he wrote, 'every city in the western world was stamped with the archetypal characteristics of coketown', and that 'between 1820 and 1900 the destruction and disorder within great cities is like that of a battlefield, proportionate to the very extent of their equipment and the strength of the forces employed.'[54]

The crux of the development lies here. Because of the Industrial Revolution the cities in the West went through a process of destruction and regeneration, both caused under economic impulses. This process was totally absent in India. Industrialization could not be a creative force behind the cities under the British rule and Calcutta could not be an exception. There was no change from organized urban handicraft to large-scale factory production in the city and in places around. Before the arrival of the English Sutanati was an important cotton production, cloth manufacturing and textile distribution centre of Bengal. That centre went down with the British predominance in Calcutta and Sutanati lost its sovereignty as a place of manufacture. It was gradually merged with Calcutta's character as a trading town. By the beginning of the 1830s when according to Blair Kling the potentiality of urbanization of Calcutta was not lost, the trading character of Calcutta and its official position as an administrative centre were well marked in the official literature of the time. In 1834, the School Book Society of Calcutta in its book *Geography of Hindoostan* defined Calcutta's status as 'likewise the capital of all India, being the residence of the supreme authorities both in Church and State.'[55] Calcutta's budding industrial periphery of which Kling seems

---

predominant basis of industrial production are cities which are healthy. Calcutta did not develop such productive relationships. That is why Calcutta has tended to become cesspool of much economic crisis of West Bengal or the whole of Bengal.' Jean Racine (ed.) *Calcutta 1981 The city, Its crisis and the debate on urban planning and development*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi 110 059, 1990, p. 121-2.

52. Ibid.

53. Mumford spoke of two different towns in the west, the *paleolithic paradise* and the *coketown*. The *Paleolithic paradise* refers to the towns which were pre-Industrial Revolution in their origin The *Coketown* refers to towns which grew upon coal-mines and around steel plants and smelting factories.

54. Lewis Mumford, *The City in History*, 1961, p. 508.

55. School Book Society of Calcutta, *Geography of Hindoostan*, Calcutta, 1834, p. 4.

to be so eloquent was not mentioned. On the contrary it highlights the commercial character of the city. It said that in 1814 the imports, from beyond the seas, were at 18,100,000 sicca[56] rupees and export at sicca rupees 47,600,000. The inland imports and exports together amounted to sicca rupees 10,400,000 making a grand total of sicca rupees 76,100,000. This was a staggering figure—highest attained by any city in India at the time. Seven decades later, in 1903-04 the *Imperial Gazetteer*[57] determined the character of Calcutta in terms of the commodities it imported from outside—goods worth Rs. 23.91 lakhs from Bengal, Rs. 6.28 lakhs from the United Provinces, Rs. 2.39 lakhs from Assam and Rs. 1.75 lakhs from the Punjab. This command in business with the traditional zones from the Punjab to Assam erstwhile considered as the hinterland of Calcutta port was considered to be a point of elation in the *Imperial Gazetteer* and it shows that the city had never had any industrial character on which its glory could rest. From the Census to the *Imperial Gazetteer* there was a general recognition that Calcutta was essentially non-industrial and that it had become the capital of an empire with a sound commercial base. This was the position of Calcutta at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century.

Calcutta was not industrialized, writes Barun De, because it had no production principles. In his own words 'there was no genuine production principle in Calcutta and I do not think that the British had production principles, only commercial ones in India.'[58] Production principles within its own core and production relations with its periphery both were absent in India and were not developed even after independence. 'But in any case', Barun De adds, 'whether it was Durgapur, Kalyani or Haldia, Calcutta did not establish, not even after Indian independence, the sort of productive relationship that Edinburgh established with Glasgow.'[59] The case, however, of Calcutta, not being built around a factory, was not a very particular case. Biplab Dasgupta, an economist of urban studies, notes:

'Actually none of the Third World cities have been built around factories. All of them had a certain similarity: they were built by the colonial masters to serve a certain

56. 'Under the Great Mughals all rupees coined under the reigning King were considered as *siccas* and passed at their original value during his life. When a new king ascended the throne the rupees of the former reign became subject to a *batta* (discount) and were not received into the royal treasury. *Sicca* rupees were the only coins received in official payments.' —N. K. Sinha, *Economic History of Bengal*, Vol. I, Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1965, p. 129. The *sicca* rupees that were prevalent in the Bengal Presidency and known as the *Bengal type sicca* rupees were last coined in 1793. Under the nawabs the Bengal *siccas* were coined in Dhaka, Murshidabad and Patna. In the first three decades of the nineteenth century all *siccas* prevalent in the Bengal Presidency were coined within the territory of the East India Company. *Sicca* rupees weighed 192 grains troy ('the system of weights used in England for gold, silver and precious stones' —*Chambers's Twentieth Century Dictionary*)

57. *The Imperial Gazetteer, The Indian Empire*, 1908, Vol. III, Table IX, p. 4.

58. Barun De, op. cit., p. 122.

59. Ibid.

purpose, which was to procure goods and materials from the hinterland, and to ship them to the metropolitan centre. That was the objective and the port played a certain role in that development. Which is why, not only Calcutta, but also cities such as Algiers or Accra played the same role, being the centre where the ruling class lived, where the privileges were concentrated, from where the country was directed and administered, and also into which the resources and materials of the rest of the country were brought and then shipped to other parts of the world, to the metropolitan centres.'[60]

This was what Calcutta seemed to be in the heydays of the British rule: a satellite of the Empire from where the imperial policies were to be coordinated. Blair Kling believed that Calcutta had a sovereignty of its growth which it maintained for about one full century—from the middle of the eighteenth to the middle of the nineteenth century when it had a nucleus of an industrial revolution budding at a local spot around Fort Gloster. That was stifled. But that did not mean that chances were all gone. The prospect of an industrial takeoff was still there in Calcutta in the middle of the nineteenth century when the British capital had already started coming in. A British sojourner in the city, George W. Johnson,[61] as late as the early 1840s, clearly defined as to how India could become an industrial country in future. He wrote:

> 'Doubtless, it is of high importance for the increase of India's wealth to improve her cotton growth, and to establish extensively on her soil the cultivation of tea-plant, but these are only some of the first steps towards the desired object.... It is now shown that the mineral wealth of India fits her for a higher destiny; and that she, like America, may be at first agricultural, but gradually may become, also, a manufacturing country.'[62]

This was the time when industries based on agriculture like indigo and rural handicrafts had yielded place to new plantation industries like tea and coffee, industries based on commercial cultivation like jute, and finally the railways and all these were being slowly introduced as avenues for the investment of the British capital in India. This was also the time when small urban industries even the traditional ones were trying to adjust with the changes and had proved to be fairly successful in keeping themselves up vis- -vis forces from outside. D.R. Gadgil says that when rural industries failed urban industries showed resilience and adjusted with the changes.[63] Even in this condition the industries around

---

60. Jean Racine, op. cit., p. 121.

61. George W. Johnson was an attorney who spent three years in Calcutta in early 1840s and narrated his experiences in a two volume book *The Stranger in India; or Three Years in Calcutta* published from London in 1843.

62. George W. Johnson, Vol. II, op. cit., pp. 218-19.

63. "Of the different forms of industry in India the only one that reflected the impact of new outside forces by a continuous change in its organization, was the indigenous urban handicrafts." "Urban industry, on the other hand, in all their crafts in which it still flourished, showed a distinct change in its organization." —D.R. Gadgil, *The Industrial Evolution of India in Recent Times* (1924), Fourth Edition, Seventh Impression, 1959 Oxford University Press, p. 173.

Calcutta did not survive. They were certainly not traditional industries and given the capital and enterprise back-up from the resident British and the Indians there they seemed to have the genre of making themselves into potential competitors of the British industries at Glasgow, Lancashire, Manchester and Sheffield. It was here that they seemed to be running cross to the British industrial and mercantile interest in England and their agents at the head of the Empire here in India. Under pressures from British industrialists and exporters the search had already begun to find out how far India could fulfill its role as a producer of raw materials—raw cottons and plantation products to suit the British industries in England. The colonial construct of dual relationship between a mother country and a colony was already being worked out in the academic frame of the British mercantilism. Robert M. Martin, a promoter of export of the British capital outside, stressed the enormous potential of India as an importer of both the British goods and the British capital. He defined the relation between England and India as 'the one'—the giver—with 'the other'—the taker —a structure where *'the one* [Britain] teeming with a hardy, industrious and ingenious population two-thirds of whom are engaged in manipulating and vending the produce of more genial climes...' will be matched by *'the other* [India] rich to overflowing with bounty with which nature has enriched the earth, and particularly so in those agricultural products necessary to the manufactures, comforts and luxuries of the more civilized nation.'[64] The construct was ready for the 'more civilized nation' theory to command its orientation in India. This was what Blink called a 'racial arrogance'[65] vis- -vis which no potential on the Indian side could be viable for growth.

Two things are worthy of note here. First, after the fall of the Union Bank the Indian capital in Calcutta was not available for industry. 'In the banking world of India,' writes N.K. Sinha, 'the ruin of the Union Bank was regarded as a public calamity.'[66] 'Its failure was a blow to Indo-British cooperation.'[67] After this capital was not mobilized for industry and Calcutta became a hub where all moneyed men invested for landed property. Real estate thus became booming in the city.[68] Meanwhile zamindaries were breaking under the rigours of the permanent settlement and their splinters were being purchased by moneyed men in the city. Capital thus changed its direction from industry to land and in the vacuum created in this wake the British capital flowed in. When this was the situation in Calcutta and in the east the industrial potential of the west—the Bombay Presidency around 1860— showed signs of development around textile industries. Even Martin's confidence was shaken at the sight of this and he feared a competition from India. 'Even the present

---

64. R.M. Martin, *History of the British Colonies*, 5 Vols. London 1834.

65. Ibid.

66. N. K. Sinha, *The Economic History of Bengal*, Vol. III: 70.

67. N.K. Sinha, op. cit., p. 71.

68. For 'Estates of Some Opulent Families of Calcutta', see Pradip Sinha, *Calcutta in Urban History*, Firma KLM, Calcutta, 1978, Appendix III.

generation,' he warned his countrymen, 'may witness the Lancashire Manufacturer beaten by his Hindu competitor.'[69]

There is a second point about Bengal's industrial potentiality about this time. Knowledge of the baneful effects of industrialization in England was trickling slowly in and People could see the miseries inflicted upon the weavers and spinners of the countryside by Fort Gloster yarn on the one hand and the machine-made imports from the West on the other.[70] Some kind of revulsion to industry also grew in public mind and Bengali interest shifted to land. This as time went on became a consolidated phenomenon in the city's economy. After the collapse of the Union Bank in 1848 and the failure of Indo-British partnership in all business activities in Calcutta circles and finally after the ultimate collapse of Fort Gloster enterprises in industry, Indians feared to invest in any venture in association with Europeans and their mind turned to other avenues of investment—land.[71] Indian business mind was not depressed when in the thirties of the nineteenth century the agency houses collapsed one by one and indigo industry, financed mostly by native capital, slowly shut down. It showed great resilience then.[72] But after the failure of the Union Bank the Indian business world shrank. Henceforth there was a tendency towards safe investment. By this time because of the activities of the Lottery Committee and the Hospital Committee the township of Calcutta was growing fast and the urban enclaves in the white town created some enchantments among the rich Indians.[73] As Indian mind became introvert and turned to safe investment orientations early, industrial ventures came to a complete close in the city and her outskirts. Calcutta's economy now became as a whole a satellite of the Empire.

---

69. Cited in Morris D. Morris, *The Emergence of an Indian Labor Force in India* Barkeley, University of California Press, p. 25.

70. Blair B. Kling, op. cit., p. 33.

71. 'The collapse of the Union Bank in 1848 came as a great shock to those Indian businessmen who were associated with British businessmen in different enterprises. Indians were junior partners in this enterprise. Its failure almost synchronized with that of Cockerell & Co., Colville Gillmore & Co., Lyall Matheson & Co., Carr Tagore and Co., Rustomji Turner & Co., and Oswald Seal & Co.' —N.K. Sinha, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 123.

72. 'Even after the failure of these agency houses a second and a very different phase of Indo-British partnership began in the pursuit of commercial profit during the years 1834-47. This was largely due to the emergence of some outstanding personalities in the field of Indian business —Dwarkanath Tagore, Rustomji Cowasji and Motilal Seal...' —N.K. Sinha, op.cit., Vol. III, p. 117.

73. Partho Datta (op. cit., pp. 53-4) brilliantly describes how this happened.

The Great Calcutta Killings and Unfolding of Communal Tensions : The Role and Outcome of Propaganda Literature and the Counter Propaganda

BIMAN SAMADDAR

'unish sho satchollisher poneroi August hotat ese poreni. Amader opor dhire dhire egie aschilo. Tari bochhor khanek ager kotha. Ek shanto sokale khabar table-e bose achhi hotat ekta bhoyaboho uttal gorjone chomke uthlam.... Ballygunge lake-er dik theke rasta dhore chhute asche ek jonosrot unmotto o hingsro. Tader hate lathi. Tader age age doure asche pranbhoy-e bhito ek manush. Konomote se ultodiker barir ektolay dhuke porlo.... Baba hat chepe dhore achhen tai chhader opare ki hochchhe ar dekhte parchi na. Sudhu aowaj shunte pachchi kane. Hurmur kore dorja bhenge porlo. Tarpor je aowaj ami khanikshon dhore shunlam ta amar smritite chirodiner moto grothito hoe gechhe. Manusher mathar khulite lathir aghat kirokom ekta dhopdhop shobdo. Amar abhignotay prothom samprodayik dangar boli.... Se rate jor elo, prochondo jorer ghore bhul boklam.'[1]

This horrendous story was an act of a real communal murder performed at the time of the Great Calcutta Killing (August 1946), which was witnessed and felt badly by Mrs Krishna Basu in her childhood. Mrs Basu was right when she pointed out the slow but steady progress of partition of 1947 by using the means of communal violence. But the situation of pre-partition (1947) Bengal was not so easy to narrate and understand, especially, when we unearth such documents which are not only diametrically opposite but also very difficult to understand. One of such findings was the great success of the historic General Strike to support the demands of the staff of the postal and telegraph department on 29 July 1946. It was a 'General Strike by All Communities' in which all people, irrespective of Hindu-Muslim divide, participated and made it the biggest general strike in the history of two hundred years of British rule.[2] But just after eighteen days, on 16 August 1946, an apalling riot (The Great Calcutta Killing) started and simply showed disdain on the fraternity shown some days earlier. What were the causes behind such a quick turn towards violence? What were the means of organizing such a deadly riot? Was the riot an actually sound of treading for the forthcoming partition? Finally what was the missing link between the fraternity shown in the general strike (29 July 1946) and the paroxysm shown in the riot? In our present research paper the researcher wants to search the missing link as well as the covert tools or means of organizing such a bloody fratricidal killing which extirpated the notion of united India completely and manifested the idea of two separate states.

1. Krishna Basu, *1947: Smriti-Bismriti* (in Bengali), Ananda, Kolkata, 1994, pp. 49-50.
2. *Amritabazar Patrika*, 31 July 1946.

During study and research on the history of partition of India in 1947, what appears to have been ignored so far in the investigation and analysis of 'propaganda literature' which had a significant role in organizing the horrific riots, both before and after the partition. An impassioned retrospection seems to be in order to reconstruct a true history. With the objective in view, we endeavour to examine the propaganda literature of that time and to analyse whether it paved the way for the massive exodus and the much-needed rehabilitation effort thereafter.

As a matter of fact, along with the Muslim leadership, openly demanding a separate state, majority of the top Congress leadership of the time too accepted the partition as a ground reality. Communal riot of 1946 and publicity of propaganda literature there on worked to convince the middle and lower order of the Congress leadership along with the general mass of people belonging to both the communities also that partition and expatriation were inescapable.

The 1946—Calcutta massacre did not come up all of a sudden. A mindful study of the relevant documents seeks to substantiate the proposition put forward by the eye witness that, to start with, there was a well-knit design behind the pogrom.[3] Dr Suranjan Das (*Communal Riots in Bengal, 1905-1947*) also underscores the importance of propaganda literature. In what follows we propose to identify the political motive behind the propaganda, vis- -vis the factors, including the role of the then Communist Party of India, that contributed in constructing an anti-pogrom publicity and in promoting an anti-communal mindset within the refugee community when the environment was thoroughly charged with communal underpinnings.

Nehru's declaration on 10 July 1946 that the Congress Party would participate only in the Parliament and might change if necessary, the Cabinet Mission Planning, was taken by the Muslim league as an act of uncharitable treachery. A call for 'Direct Action' was announced and a two-part propaganda in support followed. In the first part of the propaganda news media played a dominant role while direct propaganda based on personal communications, anonymous or pseudonymous leaflets, booklets, etc. constituted the lion's share of the covert part.

Jinnah is on record to have declared that we are not going to fear either the British Machine guns or the Congress Non-cooperation. He said, 'Today we have also forged a pistol and are in a position to use it.'[4] In a call published in a newspaper addressed to the Muslim young people in the first week of August 1946, Mr Surawardi, the Prime Minister of Bengal said, 'Marshal all your forces under the banner of the Muslim League'.[5]

During the period of 31 July to 16 August, propaganda was carried on steadily to

---

3. L/P & J/8/655, IOR, Major Sim to Eroll, MP. 23 August 1946. Cited in Suranjan Das, *Communal Riots in Bengal: 1905-1947*, OUP, Delhi, 1993, p. 171.

4. *Amritabazar Patrika*, 31 July 1946.

5. *Morning News*, 5 August 1946.

unite the Muslim community. This was a call for joining the Muslim National Guard on the one hand, and Jinnah's demand for keeping 'ethics' outside the circle of the struggle, on the other.[6] Nazimuddin, in this context, uttered, 'we are not restricted to non-violence'.

The league leadership, who hailed violence openly right from the beginning, started opposing it as the riot became imminent.[7] At this point of time, major responsibility of propaganda was taken over by the non-government agencies. Character of propaganda also changed thereafter. In a public communiqué, in the form of a leaflet Jinnah was depicted with a sword in his hand along with the caption, '*Asha chherona, talwar hate tule nao, ohe kafir, tomar dhwongsher din beshi dure noy*'.[8] Another pronounced, '*Ei Ramjan masei Islam o kafir der modhye prothom prokashyo juddho arombho hoy.*'[9]

Almost all the mosques at the same time were urged to make the declaration for 'direct action'. In an editorial note of a newspaper (1 August 1946), Muslims were inspired to active their right to even at the sacrifice of their lives.[10] A pamphlet published, 'We are starting a *jehad* in your (God's) name... we promise before you that we entirely depend on you. Make us victorious over the *kafirs*, enable us to establish the kingdom of Islam in India'.[11] An Urdu publicity/propaganda document instructed every young man to wait inside their respective camps until order from *Quid-e Azam* was received.[12] Another pamphlet announced Indian Muslims would place their first step towards independence on 16 August.[13] A pamphlet declared, 'We shall then see who will play with us, for rivers of blood will flow. We shall have the swords in our hands and the noise of *zikr*. Tomorrow (16 August) will be the doomsday.'[14] Another pamphlet published, '*Golamir louha-srinkhol bhenge azadi anibe mugur*, sholoi August Direct Action Day'[15]

Because of the consistent propaganda of this sort, the Muslim people involved were convinced, according to Dr Suranjan Das, that they were doing all this on behalf of the Muslim Government of Bengal.[16] No doubt this was precisely the much coveted desire

---

6. Ibid., 2 August 1946

7. *Amritabazar Patrika*, 12 August 1946.

8. Shila Sen, *Muslim Politics in Bengal*, p. 213.

9. *Pravasi* (Bengali translation), Ashwin, p. 362.

10. *Asr-e Jadid*, editorial, 1 August 1947.

11. Cited in G. D. Khosla, *Stern Reckoning*, pp. 49-50, and S. Sen, *Muslim Politics in Bengal*, p. 213.

12. Cited in Suranjan Das, p. 168.

13. IB Records.

14. Cited in Suranjan Das, p.168.

15. IB Records, Cited in Suranjan Das.

16. Suranjan Das, p. 169.

of the propaganda programme. In addition, Bengal Provincial League distributed 50,000 copies of a booklet authored by Humaun Akhtar. It sought to highlight the Hindu-Muslim difference in the following manner:

Orthodox Islam	**Orthodox Hinduism**
Belief in the unity of God	Belief in numerous inanimate and animate representations of God incarnating on earth
Islam stands for fraternity and universal brotherhood	Hinduism perpetuates social distinctions and upholds the caste system
Muslims: Abolishers of Idolatry	Hindus build and worship idols
Muslims bury the corpse	Hindus cremate the dead
Muslims eat beef	Majority worship cow
General dress: *pyjama* and *the-mad*	General dress: *Saree* and *dhoti*
Muslims perform the *Haj* at Kaaba	Hindus go for their *tirth* to Benaras, Gaya and Mathura
Muslim believe in the existence of Paradise and Hell	Hindus believe in life after death, and that human soul, after achieving mukti will be absorbed into their God.

Etc.[17]

Propaganda launched by the Hindus was not lagging either. In a circular drafted by the Hindu Mahasabha it was appealed to give a befitting reply to the despotism of the Muslim League and to defeat the strike call.[18] Circulars issued by the Bengal Provincial Hindu Students' Federation also urged the same.[19] The Hindu Shakti Sabha also started to distribute heated pamphlets.[20] Even the Bengal Provincial Congress sent notice to all District Committees requesting to oppose the strike call.[21]

Not that all the Hindu propaganda opposed partition of Bengal. Inevitability of partition was upheld instead. Following is a synopsis of a question-answer type booklet confiscated by the police during May 1947.

---

17. Humayun Akhtar, *How Much is the Difference*, cited in Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *India Partitioned: The Other Face of Freedom* 1, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 45-7.
18. Suranjan Das, p. 169.
19. *Star of India*, 21 September 1946.
20. Calcutta Disturbances Commission of Enquiry, Minutes of Evidence, No. X, p. 102.
21. Suranjan Das, p. 169.

Do you know who the minister is in the province?	Suhrawardy
Why is Suhrawardy the minister?	Because the Muslim League is in power
Why is power in the hands of the Muslim League?	On the ground that the Muslims have a slender majority in the total head counts in West and East Bengal together.
How long are the Muslim League ruling?	10 years
Who are controlling the District Boards at present?	The Muslims
Who are controlling the School Boards	The Muslims
Do they belong to the Muslim League?	Yes
What is the name of this country?	Bharatvarsha or Hindustan
What do the Muslims want?	Pakistan
Why were not the *goondas* brought to book in Noakhali?	Because the Police and the Magistrates are mostly Muslims
To whom does this country belong?	To us, Hindus
Where did the Muslims originate?	The Mughals and the Pathans illegitimately converted Hindus to Islam
Who get the Government jobs?	The Muslims
What do we want now?	To ensure that the Hindus get back the power that is legitimately their due
Then what do you want to do?	We want the Hindu majority areas to be constituted into a separate Hindu province. Only then would power come to the hands of the Hindus.

Etc.[22]

From the second day of the Calcutta riot, Muslims were being targeted in larger numbers and that instigated the attack on Hindus in Noakhali. News of atrocities there was spread surreptitiously through various media including personal letters. One such letter from 'A Hindu sufferer' written to Gandhiji who was stationed at Sodepur ashram contained,

---

22. Confiscated Bengali Leaflet on 24 May 1947. Cited in Basudeb Chottopadhyay, *Partition and Migration: Perspectives on 1947*, in Bhaskar Chakrabarty (ed.), *Exploring Regional Security: South and Central Asia*. K. P. Bagchi, Kolkata, 2003, pp. 23-5.

'Viceroy of India, Governor of Bengal and Bengal Premier, Conjointly have done (sic) uncivilized behavior on Hindus in such a way that they will fathom its intensity when the following things happen:

1. Let Viceroy's wife be abducted and married to Muslim Leaguer.

2. Let Governor's wife be abducted and married to a Pathan.

3. Let the Bengal Premier's wife be abducted and married to a Hindu cobbler.

4. Let there be forcible conversion to Mohammadanism of wives of viceroy of India and Governor of Bengal and a forcible conversion to Hinduism of the wife of Bengal Premier.

5. Let there be rapes on their wives.'[23]

Undeniably, many such letters, awfully pervasive and utterly provocative in contents, reached the targeted mass of people bypassing the postal network. Through hyperbolic transmission and over-activism of a section of the press supported by political leadership, the propaganda helped construct a chain reaction leading eventually to the Bihar massacre in Patna, Munger, Bhagalpur, Gaya, Santal Parganas. From there it spread to Gar Mukteswar, Meerat, Gaziabad, the fringes of Delhi and Allahabad.[24]

Such publicity materials disseminating brisk communal venom were quite huge in number. In the 'Appeal to Colleagues' a few staff members of the armed police force of Dacca requested the Hindu members in November 1946, to face the Muslim enemies in a united way.[25] During the same time a press hand-out *Sangram* published from Calcutta, asked the young Hindu people to take revenge of the atrocities perpetrated upon their mothers and sisters.[26] Hindu ladies were advised to carry a knife with them in yet another publication from Calcutta (January 1947). Further the Hindus were instructed to prepare a huge stock of weapons, to abduct young Muslim ladies, to marry them after conversion and etc.[27] There were numerous pamphlets circulated at that time to spread the venom of communalism. Some examples: '*Noakhalite agun jwole, hindura jai rosatole*', '*Noakhalir mormontud biboron o amader kortyobyo*', '*Joboner rokto kothai?*', '*kukur Surawadir mundu chai, sada chamrar rokto chai*', etc.[28] A pamphlet accused Punjab Muslim Armed police

---

23. PM 937/46, also cited in Joya Chatterjee, *Bengal Divided : Hindu Communalism and Partition, 1932-1947,* CUP, New Delhi, 1995, p. 242.

24. Sailesh Kumar Bandopadhyay, *Dangar Itihas* (in Bengali), Mitro o Ghosh, Kolkata, Ashar 1405, pp. 64-5. Also cited in Krishna Basu, *1947: Smriti-Bismriti,* p. 55.

25. PM Series, File No. 937/46.

26. 'Sangram', undated, anonymous, SB, PM Series. File No. 506 part IV/46A.

27. Basudeb Chottopadhyay, *Partition and Migration: Perspectives on 1947,* in Bhaskar Chakrabarty (ed.), *Exploring Regional Security: South and Central Asia.*

28. PM 937/46, also cited in Joya Chatterjee, p. 242.

for capturing Hindus and handed them over to the Muslim goons for killing. The tone of Hindu Mahasabha in this regard was typically the same.[29]

Apart from these pamphlets there were some Hindu newspapers, along with Bengal Congress, Marwari and Muslim traders all indulging this propaganda campaign. *Anandabazar Patrika, Jugantar, Amritabazar Patrika, Hindustan Standard*—all started to collect the anti-League opinion. According to the report of *probasi*, lakhs of abhorring Urdu pamphlets were distributed among people.[30] Hindu Mahasabha was equally active to reply in a currish manner. Hindu Sevak Sangha appealed to the people to oppose the strike by saying '*sabdhan sholoi August*'. According to Harun-or Rashid, this propaganda also carried another message: 'The Hindus will have to give a clear reply to the high-handedness of the Muslim League'.[31] On the contrary Congress after giving the green signal to the partition was compelled to initiate a movement questioning the validity of Surawardi Government. As a result the residence of Dr Bidhan Chandra Roy, offices of the Congress State Committee and a few newspapers like Hindustan Standard and Anandabazar Patrika were attacked by the rioters.[32]

A crass role was played by the Marwari businessmen in the Calcutta riot. They not only supported partition, but also spent a huge sum to build a band of rioter. Sikh community of Calcutta was equally active in rioting. They supplied huge stock of firearms and used their vehicles in the rioting. Marwari Relief Society also played an important role by distributing relief among the riot-affected migrants coming from East Bengal.

At this point of discussion we should take a pause and rearrange some of the unique questions. First of all how the communal and political identity of the East Bengal Refugees was build and influenced by the riot? Secondly, after supporting the partition what was the role played by Congress towards the East Bengal refugees? Could they expound the attitude towards the refugees? Thirdly, were the attitude and propaganda of the major political parties really in the offing for creation of post-partition Bengali refugee's socio-political identity or something else?

Undoubtedly, usually docile trading communities, after perfect calculations supported their respective parties to secure their financial future. Naturally Marwaris supported Congress and Ispahani supported the League, which was not at all a naive affair. But here arises the major question that why after the spreading of propaganda literature, the migrants who crossed the border, who passed the riot phase of 50s and finally settled down in West Bengal didn't become the fodder of Hindu communalism? Most probably it happened due to the anti-communal activities of The Communist Party of India.

29. PM File No. 937(4)/47 II & 938/47 II, also cited in Basudeb Chottopadhyay, p. 20.

30. 'Pravasi' (in Bengali), Ashwin 1353, also cited in Shila Sen, *Muslim Politics in Bengal*, p. 213.

31. Cited in Harun or Rashid, *The Fore-Shadowing of Bangladesh: Bengal Muslim League and Muslim Politics, 1936-1947*, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, Dhaka, 1985, p. 260.

32. G.D. Khosla, 'Stern Reckoning', cited in Suranjan Das, p. 175.

We may slow down here for a while again to take note of some few isolated voices of reason which were unfortunately inundated by the poignant stream of communal propaganda of the times. The veracity of Communist Party towards their anti-communal attitude was prominent enough, but inadequate to stop the riots. After the great success of the General Strike on 29 July, the Communist leadership was caught almost unguarded to face the bizarre killing. According to Mr Kumud Biswas, '*Sholoi Auguster age bujhte parini je erokom hobe*'. Mr Samar Mukhopadhyay opines, '*jodio ager din Muslim elakai prochar kori, boithok kori, kintu eto bibhotso danga hobe eta bhabini*'.[33] But the smoke of discordance was too filthy and heavy to ignore. So Communist Party was expecting a '*ghoroa lorai ebong byapok danga*' and appealed for a '*milito songram*'[34] In our present research we can narrate these as anti-riot propaganda of a different style. Open anti-riot Communist propaganda was also not uncommon. The members of the Tram Workers' union, an outfit of the CPI, fought valiantly against the rioters. It was a result of long anti-riot propaganda of Communist leaders among the tram workers.[35] A joint effort to stop riot was launched by CPI, RSP, Forward Bloc and Democratic Vanguard party.[36] Mr Jyoti Basu led an anti-riot procession with the Rail Workers at Narkeldanga on 18 August.[37] Finally on 18 August Communist Party appealed in Swadhinota, '*Bhaie bhaie lorai ekhoni bondho korun.. . Asun amra sokole ekotre amader sei purono Kolikata, Hindu-Musalmaner Kolikata, British adhipotyer biruddhe oikyoboddho Kolikata firaia ani*'.[38] Copies of a Bengali leaflet '*Kolikatay abar Danga Hoite Dibo na*' issued by the Communist Party were distributed in Bhowanipore and Park Circus areas on 27 March 1947.[39] On 1 April 1947, copies of a leaflet: '*Hindu Musalman Milita Bhabe Dangar Sarajantra Byartha Karun*' were distributed at Khidirpur by Port workers' Joint Council of Action.[40] 'It urged citizens of Khidirpur and Metiabruz to identify out rumour-mongers... .'. Khidirpur Trade Union Peace Committee also distributed a leaflet named, '*Khidirpurer Hindu Musalman Majoor Bhai Sab*'.[41] Though Dr Basudeb Chottopadhyay narrates these efforts as 'hopelessly inadequate to stem the tide'[42], yet in

---

33. Amalendu Sengupta, *Uttal Chollish: Asomapto Biplob* (in Bengali), Pearl Publication, Kolkata, 1989, pp. 191-2.

34. *Swadhinota*, 16 August 1946.

35. Interview of Mr Biren Majumder, published in *Ganadarpan*, August 1989 and interview of Mr Gopal Acharya, published in *Kalantar*, 7 August 1992. Cited in Sandip Bandopadhyay, *Itihaser Dike Fire Chechollisher Danga* (in Bengali), Radical, Kolkata, 2010, p. 54.

36. Sandip Bandopadhyay, p. 54.

37. 'Amritabazar Patrika', 18-19 August 1946.

38. *Swadhinata*, 18 August 1946.

39. Cited in Basudeb Chottopadhyay, p. 35.

40. Ibid., p. 35.

41. Ibid., p. 35.

42. Ibid., p. 35.

our present research we beg to differ from this sort of narration. May be at that point of time these efforts were not competent enough to stop the riot but the leftover of these ground work did some effects on the human psyche and it was able to tune the anti-communal activities of CPI just before and after the partition. The final outcome was most probably an increasing political acceptability among the refugees.

One weakness of Communist Party was also omitted by many historians; most probably it's the reason for being 'hopelessly inadequate' Communist propaganda. It's the untold narration of Muslim League—CPI chemistry. We have to keep in mind one thing that CPI didn't oppose the strike of 16th. In a meeting at University Institute Hall Communist leadership clearly hesitated to oppose the strike in fear of riot among the tram workers.[43] But according to Tram Workers' Union leader Mr Gopal Acharya, this decision was not unquestionable among party workers.[44] There were some political calculations and game played by the League leaders to confuse temporarily and emasculate the Communist resistance towards the riot. Earlier, CPI (1943) supported the claim of a separate Muslim State and now on 15 August 1946, the League Government decided to free some arrested revolutionaries. Among them were many important communist leaders.[45] In the present research we think that this was not a case of collusion, but without these political confusion and calculations CPI could launch a bigger anti-communal, anti-riot propaganda. But this narration also falls short of authenticity because in the days of riot many offices of communist party also were attacked let alone, the attacks on some Communist leaders.[46] On the other hand CPI was alleging the Congress for their prodding and counter propaganda at the last moment which ultimately increased the communal tension.[47] So for a more authentic explanation we need to look at the activities of CPI after partition, specially, at the initial stages of refugee problem.

Immediately after partition CPI tried to get close to the refugees, but in the communally charged backdrop, the activities of Hindu Mahasabha and the fervor of anti-communism they 'called in the Mahila Atma Raksha Samity and visualized it as a Trozan Horse within enemy territory'.[48] MARS acted not only as a bridge between CPI and refugees, but also spread the communist and anti-communal teaching to the refugee ladies. Slowly but surely by this ideological transformation the refugees understood the politics of communal riots. At that point of time MARS mobilized women into the peace movement by linking the

---

43. 'Amritabazar Patrika', 16 August 1946.

44. *Nagorik Mancha Bulletin* (in Bengali), February 1990, cited in Sandip Bandopadhyay.

45. 'Hindustan Standard', 16 August 1946.

46. 'Amritabazar Patrika', 18 August 1946.

47. Narayan Bandopadhyay, *Parichay* (Bengali magazine), Ashwin 1353.

48. Prafulla Chakraborty, 'The Marginal Men', Lumiere Books, Kalyani, 1990, p. 50. Also cited in Gargi Chakravartty, *Coming Out of Partition: Refugee Women of Bengal*, Bluejay Books, New Delhi, 2005, p. 59.

issue of peace with the distress of refugee women. By linking the women's movement with the peace issue MARS became affiliated to an International body for women called WIDF (Women's International Democratic Federation) and was able to keep the Hindu Mahasabha at bay.

At this point of time Central Government clearly took an anti-Bengali refugee stance. Many leaders of State Congress openly accused the Bengali refugees for the distress of West Bengal and threatened to send them back.[49] On the contrary the fight was carried forward by the undivided Communist Party. Jasodhara Bagchi and Subhoranjan Dasgupta was rightly pointed out that the involvement of the communists with the victims of partition arose out of years of work in the towns and villages of undivided Bengal. The IPTA movement was a direct response to the hunger and death of the people of Bengal in the 1943 famine. Manikuntala Sen, talks about the partition as having arrived after breaking the unity of people and workers that had been built up, so painstakingly.[50] But the political turmoil of the 1940s caused many leftist women activists, like Nibedita Nag, to go back to East Pakistan to resume their unfinished work.[51] There is no question about it that these activities of CPI was a propaganda of a different type, which can't fit into the grand narrative of propaganda literature. But a minute search of local narratives of the colonies of Calcutta and suburb can open up a possibility of a new story, marked by the struggle and reorganization—which is remarkably free from the violence-victimhood paradigm. With the creation of new colonies the feminist geography also started to change radically and 'with this reorganization of space came a refiguring of gender and of women's relationship to public and private spaces'. However, in the colonies of Calcutta and suburb 'It brought about politicization and a growing awareness of the communal problems faced by the refugees living in the colonies.'[52] Undoubtedly, it is the outcome of the search of the local narrative of communist propaganda.

Whether this particular non communal and benign situation of West Bengal indulged a Muslim reverse as well as a fresh migration from East Pakistan just after partition or not is a matter of another great debate, which, unfortunately, is outside the scope of this paper. Joya Chatterjee (*The Spoils of Partition: Bengal and India, 1947-1967*), gives a small narration of the reverse migration[53] and Gargi Chakravartty (*Coming out of Partition:*

---

49. Joya Chatterjee, *The Spoils of Partition: Bengal and India, 1947-67*, CUP, Delhi, 2007.

50. *The Trauma and The Triumph: Gender and Partition in Eastern India* (ed.), Jasodhara Bagchi and Subhoranjan Dasgupta, Stree, Kolkata, 2007, pp. 7-8.

51. Nibedita Nag, 'Opposed to the Exodus', *The Trauma and The Triumph: Gender and Partition in Eastern India*, pp. 155-8.

52. Rachel Weber, 'Re (Creating) the Home: Women's Role in the Development of Refugee Colonies in South Calcutta', *The Trauma and The Triumph: Gender and Partition in Eastern India*, pp. 70-1.

53. Joya Chatterjee, *The Spoils of Partition: Bengal and India, 1947-67*, pp. 181-208.

Refugee Women of Bengal), presents a record of fresh migration, mainly from the IB records.[54] The point of view of this present research is somewhat different from theirs. Here we want to argue that both of these fresh and reverse migrations were a symbol of the dilution of communal propaganda. Though Dr Suranjan Das had pointed out that some socialists also took active part in the riot,[55] yet it was surely a stray incident and may be a reason of the decaying grip of socialists on refugees. Very quickly, after partition the prerogative of the people of West Bengal, particularly of Calcutta and suburb, had been changed and they showed a steady disdain towards the communal hatred. It might not be too fashionable if we can give the credit to the continuous counter propaganda of anti-communalism by the Communist Party. Joya Chatterjee indicates that this anti-communal stance actually helped not only the CPI, but also Congress a bit to capture the vote of the Muslim minorities later.[56] But this narration may act as an over simplification if we ignore the history of the days of riot and the counter propaganda by CPI. Again, this discussion is out of the periphery of this particular paper. So we can conclude by saying that the propaganda literature and the following bloodshed compelled the top Congress leaders to press for the partition. Though they didn't popularize the idea of bloodshed openly like Muslim League yet scope remains to believe that they didn't resist it wholeheartedly by their enormous organizational strength either. Propaganda literature did the rest. Finally they failed to read the political implication of the refugee influx. No wonder, Communist Party, by their anti-communal propaganda, by maintaining undivided organization, and by their pro-refugee activities, became the natural choice of the Bengali refugees.

---

54. Gargi Chakravartty, *Coming Out of Partition: Refugee Women of Bengal*, Bluejay Books, New Delhi, 2005, pp. 122-3.

55. Interview of an eye witness, Dr T. Roychowdhury, taken by Dr Suranjan Das in *Communal Riots in Bengal: 1905-1947*, p. 176.

56. Joya Chatterjee, 'The Spoils of Partition: Bengal and India, 1947-67', pp. 202-6.

BOOK REVIEW

Chittagong, the picturesque south of Bangladesh stands distinct not only in its own country but in South Asia in general. The cultural abode of different religion and distinct intellectual blend made it a stand apart region in its own land.

Cultural consciousness of the people of Chittagong is just not praiseworthy but very intriguing. Anyone associated with this land has a strange bond with this place.

Adamya Chattagram Festival of 2012 was a wonderful attempt of a group of proud intellectuals of Chittagong to present the heritage of the land to the world.

The bilingual descriptive catalogue Eternal Chittagong preparedby Shamsul Hossain not only brings alive the well curated exhibition to the reader but also opens the door of the diverse culture extending from the prehistoric time to the present Chittagong.

The catalogue is the culmination of the Adamya Chattagram Festival held in 2012 in Chattagram. The catalogue begins its journey with four double sided well-taken photographs of beach Patenga, river Karnafuli's meeting with the sea, picturesque lake and hillocks of Chittagong, the green urban forest and the large vessels of the port. These pictures encompass the distinct mark of Chittagong.

It then moves to the collection of excerpts of the accounts written by different tourists, travellers and scholars from 12th century down to 20th century and those are supplemented by a beautiful translation of the 16th century literary piece of Laili Majnu mentioning Chittagong by the curator of the Exhibition.

Much aesthetically it then mentioned the three connoisseur friends of the project.

The preface by Mahfuz Anam, the Editor-Publisher of The Daily Star in much brevity laid down the story of the project, the exhibits and the purpose of such a festival. The main aim was to canvass the culture and history of this unique geographical entity which was able to maintain its exclusivity throughout its existence.

Followed by a long acknowledgement which otherwise is much justified for a well-researched diverse project of its kind.

The introduction gives precisely the nature of the cultural diversity, types and kind of antiquity of the place, the state of conservation with a critical view and the need for a research resource centre.

It divides the work into six timeline : pre-history, pre-medieval Harikela, Sultanate Chatgaon, Arakanese Chatigrama, Mughal Islamabad / Chatgram and colonial Islamabad / Chateegaon.

It mentioned the archaeologists who all worked in the area and with the tools and artefacts found in the area.

The justification of the artefacts catalogued also gives the care that has been taken to publish the catalogue. It also carefully noted about the immovable artefacts and types of architecture over different period.

The main content of the catalogue start with the prehistoric phase which unlikely is very brief. The section starts and ends with the implements of Sitakunda area which came to light in 1886AD. This definitely is a lacuna of the catalogue which started with such an excellence.

The second section is the pre-medieval Harikela. It gives a brief and apt history of Harikela and a basic map followed by eighteen exhibits. The exhibits start with the 10th century replica of a *rekha* temple and a brief history of the 10th century Harikela and description of the temple structure. The following exhibits include the famous vase grant of Devatideva-bhattaraka and copper plate of Kantideva. The exhibits have been painstakingly collected from different museums which itself is a herculean task one can presume. The section also has the impression of the of the lost Nasirabad copper plate inscription of Damodaradeva at the Asiatic Society, Kolkata. The section well curated the famous Harikela coins though it failed to link the history which numismatics does so well. The intriguing 9th century Garudarudha Vishnu preserved at Chittagong University Museum made its place in the exhibit and catalogue portraying the wide range of the exhibition. The last section of this timeline includes the Buddhist phase of the period with various Buddha sculptures and votive stupas. It also mentioned the famous Jhiuri bronze which marked the discovery of the specific art style with its large hoard in 1927.

The third section transcends us to the Sultanate Chatgaon with a precise history touching all the key issues of the period appositely. The section introduces with the obverse and reverse coin of the first Muslim conqueror of Chatgaon, Sultan Fakhr al-Din Mubarak Shah. This section includes 16th century map of Bengal by Jao de Barros and the route map from Chittagong to the then capital of Bengal inPandua. The famous mosques of the period like Fakir Mosque and the Arabic inscription have been well photographed followed by a colour photograph of the newly renovated portion of the mosque. This is followed by the detail photograph of Hammadyar Mosque. This section could have been more interestingly laid out as this is a very important adjoining period between the pre-medieval and medieval Chittagong.

The next part of thissection though makes up for it with the well laid down photographs of the ruins and inscriptions of the mosques. The Alaol Masjid inscription during the period of Sultan Barbak Shah along with the terracotta embellishment of Nusrat Shah Masjid from Shamsul Hossain's own collection takes us to the trail of the period. The Postarpar inscription and the photographs of the ruins of Chuti Khan's mosque is followed by a descriptive section of the Sultanate mint. Interestingly this section not only well documented the photographs of the coins but also analysed and transliterated the inscriptions of the

coins. The oldest masonry building of Chittagong, the tomb of BadrAuliya and the half buried gateway to the tomb has been photographed well. The section ends with an excerpt from the book of Richard M Eaton. Since other sections do not have such an ending, this is to some extant looks out of place.

The fourth section in the timeline is the Arakanese Chatigrama. The section is short with the inscription of the Bakshi Hamid Masjid followed by a brief write-up of Arakanese mint and obverse and reverse photograph of the tri-lingual and bi-lingual coins minted in the said mint.

The fifth section starts with the narrations as to how the Mughal rulers captured the port city inspite of the heavy presence of the Europeans and named it Islamabad. It also emphasised in its own capacity the importance of the conservation of the historic city centre of Andarkilla.

The importance of the war of Karnafuli which defeated the Arakanese in the hands of the Mughal is well established by another brilliant translation of Shihab al-Din Talish's Fathiyah-I-'ibriah in Bengali and English. The ruins of the Rangmahal Hill needs to be excavated well and this has been well emphasised in this section. The section then balances with the modern renovation of the old structures, the old mosque structure and the important inscriptions like the Malkhan Masjid Inscription. Interestingly the photograph of the ruins seems more intriguing in the catalogue and makes the onlooker take note of the period more than the modern renovated structures. It also perhaps notes the imbalance in the conservation of the historic monuments. Captivatingly the catalogue did not forget to mention and to present the image of the Bostami turtle in the local Bayazid Bostami pond.

The last section narrates as to how Islamabad or Chatteegaon vulgarly transformed into Chittagong in the hands of the colonial masters. Beginning with the brief history, it is followed by the photographs of the early colonial structure like the factory and the Warehouse. The magnificent and gigantic court building is followed by the General Hospital Building and Central Railway building both can compete in architectural style to any cotemporary European structure. The drawing of Captain Pogson who could locate the ruins of Sir William Jones is rather an interesting piece. The wooden bungalows and Mirza's pool all carry the legacy of the colonial period. This section is the most interestingly lay down as it tells the story of the past not so many years ago.

The well-researched appendix gives a longlist of the colonial architecture of Chittagong divided in different categories. This will definitely make the section interesting for the reader. The short bibliography also needs to be appreciated as this will be of immense help for researches to start with.

This one hundred and thirty five paged catalogue is not only the painstaking effort of Dr. Shamsul Hossain and his team but also portrays his love of this unique geographical place and the his passion for all that Chittagong's culture represent. One definitely needs to appreciate the effort as it sets as a precedence for such future project.

Swati Biswas